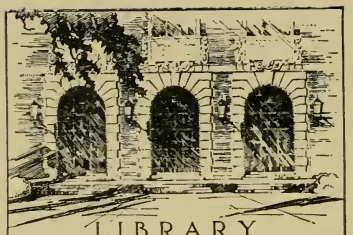

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
R22wh
1857
v. 2

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2009 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

http://www.archive.org/details/whiteliesstory02read

WHITE LIES.

A Story.

BY

CHARLES READE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
TRÜBNER & CO., 60 PATERNOSTER ROW.
1857.

[*The right of Reproduction and Translation reserved.*]

LONDON: PRINTED BY W. CLOWES AND SONS, DUKE STREET, STAMFORD STREET.

K22wh
1857
v.2

WHITE LIES.

CHAPTER I.

NOTARY read notary. The pieces of that placard flung in Perrin's face were a revelation as well as an affront.

He made inquiries, and soon learned the statesman was the champion of Beaurepaire and also a client of Picard. Putting the two together, he suspected his rival had been playing with him. 'Picard is playing that young ruffian's game,' said he. 'Perhaps means to lend him his money instead of me.' His suspicions went no farther.

But the next day a gossip told him the Beaurepaire tenants had been screwed up thirty pegs.

He saw at once the consequences to the estate. His vengeance would escape him as well as his prize.

He took a quick resolution and acted upon it.

He rode to Commandant Raynal.

That officer, it may be remembered, had months ago given him a commission to buy an estate. He had been looking out for one for him ever since, but unluckily he had not been able to find a bad

enough one to suit. An agent looks not to his employer's interest, but his own. The small nominal per centage he receives is a mere blind. He would not give you the detriment of his judgment for a paltry five per cent. From a pianoforte to a house, and down again to that most despised property, an author's creation, agency is an organized swindle.

Perrin had his eye on Beaurepaire when Raynal first gave him the commission: but he never for a moment intended to get his employer such a bargain as that. He was waiting till some one should have an estate to sell worth one hundred and eighty thousand francs. He would have gone to this man and said, 'Now if I get you your money, five per cent. comes to me of course.' This being assented to, he would have kept quiet a while: then he would have come back, and said, 'I can get you a customer, but you must ask two hundred and fifty thousand francs—the odd seventy thousand over your price is for me.'

This is the principle of agency as practised in France, in England, and above all in Poland, where an apple can't change hands without an Israelite to come between the two silly natives, and pass it across after peeling it thick. But neither in France, England, nor Poland, was the principle in all its branches better understood than by this worthy notary.

And to those principles he was now for the first

time about to be a traitor. Behold him jogging along on the dun pony, to give his principal the best bargain in the country side.

A sharp pang of remorse shot through him at the thought: but he never wavered. Fortunately for himself he was not all one vice. He was vindictive, as well as grinding; was capable of sacrificing not his interest perhaps, but a per centage on it, to revenge. When we are bent on doing a thing we find reasons of all sorts. He said to himself—'I shall be his steward, his agent; he is a soldier—never there—perhaps get knocked on the head—die intestate—aha?' Short, a vista of contingencies.

Raynal cut short the notary's glowing description of the unrivalled bargain he had with unexampled zeal and fidelity secured him.

'What is to be done?'

'We must go together to the mayor at Santenoy.'

'Good.'

'How many days shall you require to get your money from your bankers?'

'My bankers? it is all in my knapsack.'

'Ah! then we can settle this immediately.'

'No! we can't! public business first, private afterwards.' He consulted a card. 'To-morrow after one o'clock I'm free—be at Santenoy at three—will that do?'

'Yes monsieur.'

'Get everything ready—I will ride down by three. How much money?'

'About two hundred and fifty thousand francs.'

'I did not ask you about how much,' said the precisian. 'I said how much? never mind, I'll bring enough. Good day.'

Next day at a quarter before three Perrin was parading in some anxiety before the Mairie. Just at the stroke of three up clattered the commandant in full uniform; off his horse in a moment, and got a boy to hold it. He gave Perrin two hundred and fifty thousand francs, and sent him to the Mairie to buy Beaurepaire while he went to inspect a small barrack that was building in the town of Santenoy.

Perrin went in and had audience of the mayor, and announced a purchaser of Beaurepaire: the mayor's countenance fell. He loitered about; was a long time finding this document and that: at last he said, 'have you got the money?'

'Yes!' said the notary, 'two hundred and fifty thousand francs. Here they are.'

The mayor pottered about again; found a paper: put on his spectacles. 'That is not the price,' said he, 'the estate is worth two hundred and ninety five thousand francs.'

'How can that be, monsieur? two hundred and fifty thousand is the figure on your placard.'

'So it is,' said the mayor apologetically. 'I

ought to have altered it. The order from the directory mentions no sum. It is in general terms: the estate is to be sold for a certain sum, over and above the capital of the rents at twenty seven years' purchase. Since I put up that placard the rents have been raised: in evidence of which the leases have been sent over to me. Here they are. Since you propose to purchase you are at liberty to inspect them. For two hundred and ninety-five thousand one hundred and forty francs the chateau and estate are yours.'

'This is Picard,' said Perrin spitefully.

The mayor affected not to hear him. Perrin went out to tell this rebuff to Raynal. He found him inspecting the barrack. He explained the matter, and excused himself, throwing the blame on the mayor, who not being a man of business allowed a placard with false figures to stand upon his wall.

'Well but,' said Raynal, 'since it turns out to be worth two hundred and ninety-five thousand one hundred and forty francs, instead of two hundred and fifty thousand francs, all the better for me: it is only paying the odd money.'

'But where are we to get it? I would lend it you to-morrow, but to-morrow may be too late.'

'Oh! I have got another fifty thousand francs in my pocket,' said the other coolly. 'I brought all I have got; you did not seem very clear how much we should want.'

'Come to the mayor monsieur at once!' cried the exulting notary: 'make haste or he will pretend it is after office hours.'

When the commandant entered, epaulette on shoulder, sword clanking, and laid down the whole purchase money demanded, the mayor made no further resistance.

He was personally acquainted with Raynal: admired him, stood in awe of him, and of the sword whose power he represented. As for Raynal, he bought the property he had never seen, much as you buy a hot roll across a counter.

From this moment the ancient lands, timber, chateau, fish-ponds, manorial and baronial rights in abeyance, and the oak-tree that was older than the family itself, belonged to a soldier who had risen from the ranks, and to the heirs of his plebeian body.

'I can sleep there to-night, eh?'

The notary stared: and then smiled: here was a man who outran even his vengeance.

He explained to him that he could not sleep at his own house till he had turned his lodgers out. The law requires that we serve a notice on them.

'Let us go and serve it then.'

'But it is not even drawn up.'

'Draw it up.'

'And then it has to be engrossed.'

'Engross it. I'll wait here.'

'But it must be served before noon of the day it is served on.'

'Sac-r-r-r-r-é!! dog of a law! that can't do a single thing without half a dozen preliminaries. The bayonet for ever. Well, let me see. One of my officers lives near at hand. He is absent on leave. Do you know him? His name is Riviere.'

'I know him by sight.'

'I'll take possession of his quarters for the night: his landlady knows me.'

'Yes! yes!' cried the notary, his eyes glittering with gratified malice. 'Why he lives close to the chateau.'

'Good! then we can sally out on it in the morning.'

'Yes! commandant—yes! You have bright ideas: that is the place to sally from,' and he chuckled fiendishly. 'At ten to-morrow I call on you: and we take possession of your property.'

'So be it! at ten. Good day. I must go back to the barracks and spur the workmen.'

As the commandant went to the barracks he thought to himself—"My property," those words have a fine sound. They ought too: cost one hundred and fifty thousand francs a piece. By St. Denis I am a fortunate man! there are not many soldiers of my age that can say "my property," especially soldiers that have carried a knapsack. How proud my poor old mother would be! Ah! that spoils it all. She will not sit facing me on

the hearth. It will not be her new house : or our new house. It will only be mine. But I am an ungrateful cur to whine. We can't have everything. I'm not the first to whom prosperity has come a year or so too late. I shall not be the last. Her dream of paradise used to be a house in the country. Duty !' and the sword clanked on the pavement as he walked sharply to spur the workmen, before riding up to his quarters for the night.

CHAPTER II.

After Edouard's departure, Josephine de Beaurepaire was sad, and weighed down with presentiments.

'My friend,' said she to St. Aubin, 'I feel as I think soldiers must feel who know the enemy is undermining them: no danger on the surface: nothing that can be seen, met, baffled, attacked, or evaded. In daily peril, all the more horrible that it imitates perfect serenity, they await the fatal match.'

'You exaggerate,' replied St. Aubin, soothingly. 'We have a friend still more zealous and active than our enemy: believe me your depression is really caused by his absence: we all miss the contact of that young heroic spirit—we are a body, and he its soul.'

Josephine was silent, for she said to herself—'Why should I dash these spirits? they are so happy and confident.'

So after that she remained alone in her musings. Edouard had animated Laure and St. Aubin with a

courage that withstood the fears caused by the notary's last blow.

As for the baroness, she was like a fading plant revived by showers and sun. The system they pursued with her, which Edouard dubbed reticence, made her a happy old woman. She was allowed to see her own champion's last move, and then the curtain was dropped. This then was to her the whole face of affairs; her rents raised, the only hostile creditor she knew of paid off, a thousand francs in the house, and an ardent youth with the face of an angel added to her family and her heart. Shall I own that even juicy meat and Arabian coffee co-operated with nobler incidents to cheer and sustain her?—no! This refined lady was all soul—like yourself Mrs. Reader!

It was a balmy morning though late in the year: Josephine and Laure had breakfasted, and were walking slowly on the south terrace, by ordinance of physician. Recent events had brought St. Aubin quite down out of the clouds. His attention being fairly awakened to all sublunary affairs on his beat, he now superintended the health of the entire family with extraordinary severity.

Not being an apothecary with drugs to sell, right or wrong, or a physician in league with a retailer of drugs, he prescribed to each of these three ladies every dry day, and to the younger

ones every day, a draught of morning air. He was now waiting in the hall to give the baroness his arm as soon as she should come down.

'What a delicious morning, Josephine! the dear doctor is right, the morning is really a good time to walk, the air seems perfumed.'

'Yes Laure, let us enjoy our home as much as we can, since any day we may lose it.'

'Now are you going to begin?—such idle fears. The estate is for sale, but money is scarce. Who can find such a quantity of it all in a moment? Clearly it must be some one who loves us.'

'Or some one who hates us.'

'Oh! love is stronger than hate.'

'In you.'

'In everybody. Here is mamma!—here's mamma!'

Then—how you young people of an unceremonious age would have laughed—the Demoiselles de Beaurepaire, inasmuch as this was their mother's first appearance, lowered their fair heads at the same time like young poplars bowing to the wind and so waited reverently till she had slightly lifted her hands, and said—

'God bless you my children!'

'It was done in a moment on both sides, but was full of grace and piety and the charm of ancient manners.

'How is our dear mother's health this morning?' inquired Josephine.

'You must ask monsieur; he has become tyrannical, and forbids me to have an opinion on such points.'

'The baroness is well mesdemoiselles, but she will be better when she has taken my prescription —one turn before breakfast and two draughts of you know what.'

'Perhaps, since you know everything doctor, you will tell me how mamma slept?' inquired Laure a little pertly.

'She slept well, if she took what I gave her.'

'But did she take what you gave her?—ha! ha! You don't know.'

'To ascertain that I must feel her pulse.'

'I slept Laure, and I am sorry I did.'

'Ingrate!' said the doctor.

'For I dreamed, doctor, and it was an ugly dream. I was with you all in the garden; on this very spot, or near it. But it was not at this time of year, for I was admiring my flowers and my old friends the trees, and the birds were singing with all their might. Suddenly a loud clock struck. I do not know what hour, but it struck a great many times. In a moment flowers, trees, sky, and the light of day were gone. I looked—I could see no more my beloved dwelling nor my children's eyes. Shall I tell you what it means?' said the old lady gravely. 'It means that I was dead. An ugly dream my children—an ugly dream. Again, had it come a month ago—but now all is so bright and

hopeful I wish to stay with my darlings a little longer.'

'It was only a dream, dear mother,' cried Josephine gaily. 'See—here is your terrace and your chateau.'

'And here are your daughters,' said Laure; and they both came close to her to put their existence out of doubt.

'And here is your faithful though useless old friend.'

'Breakfast madam!' and Jacintha curtseyed to each lady in turn.

'Jacintha has turned the conversation agreeably. I was going to cloud you all.'

'I now prescribe breakfast, madam, and oblivion of idle dreams. You will walk half an hour more, young ladies.'

The sisters took several turns in silence. Laure was the first to speak.

'How superstitious you are, sister.'

'I? I have said nothing.'

'No; but you look volumes. I believe in our young madman more than in our dear mother's dreams.'

'He will do all he can. Yes!—yes!—I think with you. His energy, his spirits will defeat our enemy.'

'Of course they will, Josephine. I am glad you begin to look at all things as they are. See how our mother's health and spirits are improving; no

wonder, since everything now is bright—and here comes Jacintha in a wonderful hurry—mamma wants us. No; how white she is—oh Josephine there is something the matter! Mamma is ill—her dream!'

'Hush! hush! hush!' cried Jacintha who came towards them! wringing her hands. 'Oh, mesdemoiselles—oh, mesdemoiselles—*the chateau!*—oh don't let my poor mistress know—it will kill her. Oh what shall I do? what shall I do?'

'Be calm Laure—be calm Jacintha,' said Josephine trembling all over except her voice. 'Now one word—oh! my presentiments!—Beaurepaire!'

Jacintha clasped her hands and burst out sobbing.

'It is sold,' said Josephine. 'Heaven give me wisdom, what shall I do? quick girl,—who to? to that man—to Perrin?'

'To a stranger, to an officer, a grand officer. Dard told me the very name, cursed be it.'

'A Bonapartist! Then we *are* ruined. I have killed my own mother.'

'No! no! sister—she will faint.'

'No! Laure. This is no time for weakness. Come to the Pleasance. There is water there. I love my mother. I love my mother.'

She went with tottering steps towards the pool in the Pleasance, but turning the corner she started back with a convulsive cry and her momentary feebleness left her directly; she crouched against

the wall and gripped the ancient corner stone with her tender hand till it powdered, and she spied with dilating eye into the Pleasance, Laure and Jacintha panting behind her. Two men stood with their backs turned to her looking at the oak tree; one an officer in full uniform, the other the human snake Perrin. Though the soldier's back was turned, his off-handed peremptory manner told her he was inspecting the place as its master.

'The baroness! the baroness!' cried Jacintha with horror. They looked round, and the baroness was at their very backs.

'What is it?' cried she gaily.

'Nothing mamma!'

'Let me see this nothing?'

They glanced at one another, and, idle as the attempt was, the habit of sparing her prevailed, and they flung themselves between her and the blow.

'Josephine is not well, mother. She wants to go in.' Both girls faced the baroness.

'Yes, if my mother will go with me,' said Josephine.

'Jacintha,' said the baroness, 'fetch Monsieur St. Aubin. There I have sent her away. So now tell me why do you drive me back in this way?'

'Did I? I was not aware.'

'Children, something has happened,' and she looked keenly from one to the other.

'Oh mamma, do not go that way: there are strangers in the Pleasance.'

'Let me see—I tell you I will see. So there are. Insolents! Call Jacintha back, that I may order these people out of my premises.'

'Mother, for Heaven's sake,' cried Josephine, 'be calm.'

'Be calm when impertinent intruders come into my garden!'

'Mother—they are not intruders.'

'What do you mean?'

'They have a right to be in our Pleasance.'

'Josephine! Laure! oh! my heart!'

'Yes mother! that officer has bought the chateau.'

'It is impossible! *He* was to buy it for us—there is some mistake—what man would kill a poor old woman like me! I will speak to this monsieur; he wears a sword. Soldiers do not trample on women. Ah! that man.'

The notary, attracted by her voice, was coming towards her, a paper in his hand.

Raynal coolly inspected the tree, and tapped it with his scabbard, and left Perrin do the dirty work.

The notary took off his hat, and, with a malignant affectation of respect, presented the baroness with a paper.

The poor old thing took it with a curtsey, the effect of habit, and read it to her daughters as well

as her emotion permitted, and the language which was as new to her as the dialect of Cat Island to Columbus.

'*Jean Raynal, domiciled by right, and lodging in fact at the Chateau of Beaurepaire, acting by the pursuit and diligence of Master Perrin, notary; I Guillaume Le Gras, bailiff, give notice to Josephine Aglae St. Croix de Beaurepaire, commonly called the Baroness de Beaurepaire, having no known place of abode—*'

'Oh!'

'*but lodging wrongfully at the said Chateau of Beaurepaire, that she is warned to decamp within twenty-four hours—*'

'To decamp! Ah! Dieu!'

'*failing which, that she will be thereto enforced in the manner for that case made and provided with the aid of all the officers and agents of the public force.*'

'Ah! no messieurs, pray do not use force. I am frightened enough already. *Mon Dieu!* I did not know I was doing anything wrong. I have been here thirty years. But since Beaurepaire is sold, I comprehend perfectly that I must go. It is just. As you say, I am not in my own house. I will go, messieurs. Whither shall I go my children? The house were you were born to me is ours no longer. Excuse me, gentlemen—this is nothing to you. Ah! sir, you have revenged yourself on two weak women—may God forgive you! In twenty-four hours! yes! in twenty-four hours the

Baroness de Beaurepaire will trouble no one more in this world.'

The notary turned on his heel. The poor baroness, all whose pride the iron law, with its iron gripe, had crushed with dismay and terror, appealed to him.

'Oh sir! send me from the house, but not from the soil where my Henri is laid! is there not in all this domain a corner where she who was its mistress may lie down and die? Where is the new baron that I may ask the favour of him on my knees?'

She turned towards Raynal, and seemed to be going towards him with outstretched arms. But Laure checked her with fervour—

'Oh mamma do not lower yourself! Ask nothing of these wretches! Let us lose all, but not forget ourselves.'

The baroness had not her daughter's spirit. Her very person tottered under this blow. Josephine supported her, and the next moment St. Aubin came out and hastened to her side. Her head fell back; what little strength she had failed her. She was half lifted half led into the house.

Commandant Raynal was amazed at all this.

'What the deuce is the matter?' said he.

'Oh!' said the notary 'We are used to these little scenes in our business.'

'But I am not,' replied the soldier. 'You never told me there was to be all this fuss.'

'What does it matter to you monsieur—the house is yours. To-morrow at this time I will meet you here, and we will take actual possession. Adieu!'

'Good day.'

The soldier strode up and down the Pleasance. He twisted his moustaches, muttered, and '*pestéd*,' and was ill at ease.

Accustomed to march gaily into a town, and see the regiment that was there before marching gaily out, or *vice versâ*, and to strike tents twice a quarter at least, he was little prepared for such a scene as this. True, he did not hear the baroness's words, but more than one tone of sharp distress reached him where he stood, and the action of the whole scene was so expressive there was little need of words. He saw the notice given—the dismay it caused, and the old lady turn imploringly towards him with a speaking gesture, and above all he saw her carried away, half fainting, her hands clasped, her reverend face pale. He was not a man of quick sensibilities. He did not thoroughly take the scene in: it grew upon him afterwards.

'Confound it,' thought he, 'I am the proprietor. They all say so. Instead of which I feel like a thief—like a butcher. Fancy any one getting so fond of a *place* as all this.'

Presently it occurred to him that the shortness of the notice must have a great deal to do with their distress.

'What an ass that Perrin is not to tell me the

house was full of women. But these notaries comprehend nothing save law: women can't "Left should-der—forward—quick—march!"—like us: they have such piles of baggage, they never can strike tents when the order comes. Perhaps if I were to give them twenty-four days instead of hours?—hum!'

With this the commandant fell into a brown study, a rare thing for him, who had so little time and so much work. Now each of us has his attitude of brown study. One runs about the room like hyena in his den: another stands stately with folded arms (this one seldom thinks to the purpose): another sits cross legged, brows lowered: another must put his head into his hand, and so keep it up to thinking mark: another must twiddle a bit of string, or a key—grant him this, he can hatch an epic. This commandant must draw himself up very straight, and walk six paces and back very slowly till the problem was solved: there—I will be frank—he had done a good deal of sentinel work; and such is the force of early habits that when he was not busy, only thinking, his body still slipped back to its original habit.

Whilst he was guarding the old oak tree, for all the world as if it had been the gate of the Tuileries or the barracks, Josephine de Beaurepaire came suddenly out from the house and crossed the Pleasance: her hair was in disorder, her manner wild: she passed swiftly into the park.

Now Raynal was puzzling himself how to let the family know they need not pack up their caps and laces in twenty-four hours. The notary was gone, and he did not like to enter the house.

'It is theirs for four and twenty hours,' said he, 'and I should be like the black dog in their eyes if I went in.' So when he caught sight of Josephine he said, 'Ah, this will do: here is one of them, I'll tell her!'

He followed her accordingly into the park: but it was not so easy to catch her—she flew. 'Want my cavalry to come up with this one,' muttered Raynal. He took his scabbard in his left hand and ran after her: she was however still many yards in advance of him when she entered a small building which is not new to us, though it was so to Raynal. He came up and had his foot on the very step to go in when he was arrested by that he heard within.

Josephine was praying aloud: praying to the Virgin with sighs and sobs and all her soul: wrestling so in prayer with a dead saint as by a strange perversity men cannot or will not wrestle with Him, who alone can hear a million prayers at once from a million different places, can realize and be touched with a sense of all man's infirmities in a way no single saint with his partial experience of them can realize and be touched by them—who unasked suspended the laws of nature that had taken a stranger's only son, and she a widow—who

wept at human sorrow while the eyes of all the great saints that stood around it and Him were dry.

The soldier stood, his right foot on the step and his sword in his left hand, transfixed: listening gravely to the agony of prayer the innocent young creature poured forth within.

'Oh Mother of God! hear me: it is for my mother's life. She will die—she will die! You know she cannot live if she is taken away from her house and from his holy place where she prays to you this many years. Oh Queen of Heaven! put out your hand to us unfortunates! Virgin, hear a virgin!—mother, listen to a child who prays for her mother's life! The doctor says she will not live away from here. She is too old to wander over the world. Let them drive us forth: we are young, but not her, mother, oh not her! Forgive the cruel men that do this thing!—they are like those who crucified your son—they know not what they are doing. But you, Queen of Heaven, you know all; and, sweet mother, if you have kind sentiments towards me the poor Josephine, oh! show them now: for you know it was I who insulted that wicked notary, and it is out of hatred to me he has sold our beloved house to a hard stranger. Look down on me, a child who loves her mother, yet will destroy her unless you pity me and help me. Oh! my God, what shall I say? —what shall I do? mercy! mercy! for my poor mother, for me!'

Here her prayer was broken by sobs.

The soldier withdrew his foot quietly. Thought he, 'it is hardly the part of a man to listen to this poor girl; besides I have heard enough: her words knock against my breast bone: let me reflect.' And he marched slowly to and fro before the chapel, upright as a dart and stiff as a ramrod.

Josephine's voice was heard again in prayer.

Raynal looked at his watch. 'She does not give over,' said he quaintly.

Josephine little thought who was her sentinel before the chapel. She came to the door at last, and there he was marching backwards and forwards upright and stiff. She gave a faint scream and drew back with a shudder.

Not being very quick at interpreting emotion, Raynal noticed her alarm but not her repugnance: he saluted her with military precision by touching his cap as only a soldier can.

'A word with you mademoiselle!'

'With me monsieur? what can you have to say to me?' and she began to tremble.

'Don't be frightened!' said Raynal, in a tone not very reassuring. 'I propose an armistice—a conference.'

'I am at your disposal monsieur,' said Josephine, assuming a calmness that was belied by the long swell of her heaving bosom.

'You must not be afraid of me, my young lady—there is nothing to be afraid of.'

'No, monsieur: I am not frightened—not much frightened—but you are a stranger to me—and—'

'And an enemy.'

'We have no right to hate you sir. You did not know us. You just wanted an estate I suppose —and—oh!'

'Let us come to the point, since I am a man of few words.'

'If you please. My mother may miss me.'

'I was in position on the flank when the notary delivered his fire.'

'Yes.'

'I saw the old woman's distress.'

'Ah! monsieur.'

'And I said to myself—"This Beaurepaire campaign begins unluckily."'

'It was kind even to care that much for our feelings.'

'When you came flying out I followed to say a word to you. I could not catch you. I listened while you prayed to the Virgin. That was not a soldierlike trick you will say. I confess it.'

'I am not angry monsieur, and you heard nothing I blush for.'

'No! by St. Denis—quite the contrary. Well —to the point. Young lady, you love your mother.'

'What has she on earth but her children's love?'

'Young lady, I had a mother; I loved her, my

young lady. She promised me faithfully not to die till I should be a colonel—and she went and died before I was a commandant even; just before too.'

'Then I pity you,' murmured Josephine.

'She pities me! What a wonderful thing a word is! No one has been able to find the right word to say to me till to-day. "Ah! bah!" says one. "Old people will die," says another.'

'Oh!'

'"Take a young one and forget her!" that is the favourite cry of all, mademoiselle.'

'Certainly a person of monsieur's merit need never want a young woman, but that is very different—it is wicked to talk so.'

'For all that you are the only one that has said —"I pity you!"'

'I pity you!' repeated Josephine, her soft purple eye beginning to dwell on him instead of turning from him.

'Shall I tell you about her and me?' said Raynal eagerly. 'I shall be honoured,' said Josephine politely but with some constraint.

Then he told her all about how he had vexed her when he was a boy, and gone for a soldier though she was all for trade and how he had been the more anxious to see her enjoy his honours and success.

'And mademoiselle,' said he appealingly, 'the day this epaulette was put on my shoulder in Italy,

she died in Paris. Ah! how could you have the heart to do that my old woman?'

The soldier's moustache quivered, and he turned away brusquely, and took several steps. Then he came back to Josephine.

'Monsieur,' said she tenderly, 'she would have lived if she could, to please you, not herself—it is I who tell you so.'

'I believe it,' cried Raynal, a light breaking in on him: 'how can you read my mother? you never saw her?'

'Perhaps I see her in her son.'

The purple eye had not been idle all this time.

'You are wonderfully quick,' said Raynal looking at her with more and more surprise—'and what is the matter?' Josephine's eyes were thick with tears. 'What? you are within an inch of crying for my mother—you who have your own trouble at this hour.'

'Monsieur, our situations are so alike I may well spare some little sympathy for your misfortune.'

'Thank you my good young lady. Well then—while you were praying to the Virgin, I was saying a word or two for my part to her who is no more.'

'Ah!'

'Oh! it was nothing beautiful like the things you said to the other. Can I turn phrases? no! I saw her behind her counter in the Rue Quincampoix: for she is a woman of the people is my mother.

I saw myself come to the other side of the counter, and I said—"Look here mother, here is the devil to pay about this new house. Here is the old woman talks of dying if we take her from her home, and the young one weeps and prays to all the saints in Paradise: what shall we do—eh? Then my old woman said to me, "Jean you are a soldier, a sort of vagabond, though not by my will. But at least be what you are! What do you want with a house in France? you who are always in a tent in Italy or Austria, or who knows where? Have you the courage to give honest folk so much pain for a caprice? your fine chateau isn't worth it my lad, it is I who tell you so. Come now," says she, "the lady is of my age say you, and I can't keep your fine house, because God has willed it otherwise: so give her my place: so then you can fancy it is me you have set down at your hearth: that will warm your heart up a bit, little scamp, go to," said my old woman in her rough way. She was not well-bred like you mademoiselle. A woman of the people—*Rue Quincampoix*.'

'She was a woman of God's own making,' cried Josephine, the tears now running down her cheeks.

'That she was! so between her and me it is settled—what are you crying for now? why you have won the day: the field is yours: your mother and you remain—I decamp.' He whipped his scabbard up with his left hand and was off pro-

bably for years, perhaps for ever, if Josephine had not stopped him.

'But monsieur, what am I to think? what am I to hope? it is impossible that in this short interview—and we must not forget what is due to you. You have bought the estate.'

'True! well, we will talk over that to-morrow: the house to-day—that was the bayonet thrust to the old woman.'

'Ah! yes! but monsieur!'

'Silence in the ranks!' cried he sharply, 'mind I am more used to command than listen in this district!'

'Monsieur, I will obey you,' said Josephine a little fluttered.

Raynal checked her alarm. 'The order is that you run in and put the old lady's heart at rest. Tell her that she may live and die here for Jean Raynal: above all tell her about the old woman in the *Rue Quincampoix:* only put it in your own charming phrases, you know.'

'Heaven forbid! I go. God bless you Monsieur Raynal!'

'Are you going?' said he peremptorily.

'Oh yes!' and she darted towards the chateau.

Now when she had taken three steps she paused, and seemed irresolute. She turned and in a moment she had glided to Raynal again and had taken his hand before he could hinder her, and pressed two velvet lips on it, and was away again,

her cheeks scarlet at what she had done, and her wet eyes beaming with joy. She skimmed the grass like a lapwing—you would have taken her at this minute for Laure, or for Virgil's Camilla: at the gate she turned an instant and clasped her hands together, to show Raynal she blessed him again, then darted into the house.

'Aha! my *gaillarde*,' said he as he watched her fly, 'behold you changed a little since you came out.' He was soon on the high road marching down to the town at a great rate, his sword clanking, and thus ran his thoughts—

'This does one good—you are right my old woman. My bosom feels as warm as a toast. Long live the five franc pieces! And they pretend money cannot make a fellow happy. They lie! It is that they do not know how to spend it! Good Heavens! one o'clock! a whole morning gone talking.'

Meantime at the chateau, as still befalls in emergencies and trials, the master spirit came out and took its real place.

Laure was now the mistress of Beaurepaire.

She set Jacintha, and Dard, and the doctor, to pack up everything of value in the house.

'Do it this moment,' she cried; 'once that notary gets possession of the house it will be too late.'

'But have we the right?' asked St. Aubin.

'Do it,' was the sharp reply. 'Enough of folly

and helplessness. We have fooled away house and lands: our moveables shall not follow them.'

Having set the others to work, she wrote a hastyline to Riviere to tell him the chateau and lands were sold, and with this letter she ran herself to Bigot's auberge, the nearest post-office, and then she ran back to comfort her mother.

The baroness was seated in her arm chair, moaning and wringing her hands, and Laure was nursing and soothing her, and bathing her temples with her last drop of *eau de Cologne*, and trying in vain to put some of her own courage into her, when in came Josephine radiant with happiness, crying 'joy! joy! joy!' and told her strange tale much as I have told it, with this exception, that she related her own share in it briefly and coldly, and was more eloquent than I about the strange soldier's goodness, and the interest her mother had awakened in his heart. And she told about the old woman in the Rue Quincampoix, her rugged phrases, and her noble tender heart: and she ascribed all to the Virgin.

'Heaven is on our side mother. Courage my mother!'

The baroness deaf to Laure, brightened up directly at Josephine's news, and her glowing face as she knelt before her mother pouring the good news, and hope, and comfort, point blank into her face, as well as her heart. But Laure chilled them both.

'It is a generous offer,' said she; 'but one we cannot accept.'

'Not accept it?' cried the baroness with dismay.

'We cannot live under so great an obligation. Is all the generosity to be on the side of this Bonapartist—we are then noble in name only. What would our father have said to such a proposal?'

Josephine hung her head. The baroness groaned.

'No! my mother, let house and land go, but honour and true nobility remain.'

'What shall I do? you are cruel to me Laure.'

'Mamma,' cried the enthusiastic girl, 'we need depend on no one. Josephine and I have youth and spirit, and you have money.'

'We have no money. We are beggars.'

'We have a hundred thousand francs.'

'A hundred thousand francs? Are you mad?'

'No mamma: our debts were two hundred and twenty-five thousand francs. But the estate, owing to the increase of the rents, has sold for two hundred and ninety-five thousand francs.'

'How can you know what it sold for?'

'Edouard's letter told us his notary would not let it go for less. Seventy thousand francs therefore of the purchase money is ours. And we have moveables worth thirty thousand francs. With a

portion of this money, if you will permit me, I will take a farm. By-the-by, there are one thousand francs in the house too.'

'A farm!' shrieked the baroness.

'Edouard's uncle has a farm, and we have had recourse to him for help.'

'Ah! behold the key of the enigma,' said the baroness satirically. 'It is the child's lover who has been speaking to us all this time, not herself. A farm-house! I prefer the grave.'

'Better a farm-house than an alms-house,' cried Laure, 'though that alms-house were a palace instead of a chateau.'

Josephine winced and held up her hand deprecatingly.

The baroness paled: it was a terrible stroke of language to come from her daughter.

She said sternly—

'There is no answer to that. We were born nobles, let us die farmers: only permit me to die the first.'

'Forgive me, mother,' said Laure kneeling. 'I was wrong—it is for me to obey you—not to dictate. I speak no more.' And, after kissing her mother and Josephine, she crept humbly away.

'The moment they have a lover he detaches their hearts from their poor old mother. She is not to me now what my Josephine is.'

'Mamma, she is my superior. I see it more and more every day. She is proud: she is just. She

looks at both sides. Your poor Josephine is too apt to see only those she loves.'

'And that is the daughter for me,' cried the baroness opening her arms wide to her.

Josephine nestled to her, and soothed her all day, and kept telling her Heaven was on their side, and she should never have to leave Beaurepaire.

'Let me temporize,' thought Josephine, 'and keep her happy: that is the first consideration.'

The next morning when they were at breakfast, in came Jacintha to say the officer was in the dining-room and wanted to speak with the young lady he talked to yesterday. Josephine rose and went to him.

'Well mademoiselle,' said he gaily, 'the old woman was right. Here I have just got my orders to march: to leave France in a month. A pretty business it would have been if I had turned your mother out. So you see there is nothing to hinder you from living here.'

'In your house monsieur?'

'Why not? Are you too proud?'

'Forgive us! It is a fault that should not survive our fortunes.'

'Well but—yesterday.'

'I have reflected. I was unjust.'

'If such an offer was made to my mother, instead of yours, I should not be too proud to take it; but it seems you belong to the nobility. Now

I rose from the ranks; so I have no right to be proud.'

Raynal said this inadvertently, and in good faith. But the quicker Josephine read it satirically and ironically. She coloured up.

'Forgive me sir if I have offended you. It was as far from my intention as from your merit.'

There was a pause.

'Oh! your delicacy does not surprise me neither. I can understand it.'

'I am sure you can.'

Another pause.

'Confound it,' roared Raynal angrily, 'why did I go and buy the house? I didn't want it.'

'Some other would have bought it, some one more severe, less considerate, than you monsieur. I beg you to believe that it is a great comfort to us not to be removed with an unkind hand from so beloved a place.'

There was another silence. Raynal was puzzled. He sentinelled Brittany as represented by a bad map that hung on the wall. Josephine eyed him furtively, in secret anxiety as he marched to and fro.

All this time she had been saying what she felt she ought to say, in hopes that the man would do his part, and pooh pooh her, and carry out his scheme for her good in spite of her teeth—her tongue rather. For to decline the thing we want, and so not only get it but have it forced upon us; the advantage of having it plus the credit of re-

fusing it, is delicious: is it not mesdames? and well worth risking all for: is it not mesdames?

Now Raynal was a man—a creature not accustomed to disguise its wishes, and therefore apt to misinterpret such as do: above all he was an honest man. A word from him was a thing, the exact thing he meant. So he took for granted Josephine was saying exactly what she meant, and she nonplussed him.

When she saw her success, she wished she had declined more faintly, and the interview was to recommence.

Had it recommenced, she would have done just the same over again: it was not in her blood to do any other. Luckily Raynal's brown study resulted in a fresh idea.

'I have it,' said he, 'this must be settled by a third party, a mutual friend, some one more skilful than I, and who can arrange this trifle so as not to shock your delicacy. I am no diplomatist.'

Raynal interrupted himself by suddenly opening a window and shouting—

'Hallo! come here—you are wanted.'

Josephine almost screamed—'What are you doing monsieur; that is our enemy, our bitterest enemy. He only sold you the estate to spite us, not for the love of you. I had—we had—we mortified his vanity. It was not our fault—he is a viper. Oh! sir pray be on your guard against his counsels.'

These words spoken with great fire and earnest

ness, carried conviction, and when the notary came in, the contrast between the invitation that brought him and the reception that met him twenty seconds after was droll.

Perrin started at sight of Josephine, and Raynal hardly knew what to say to him. Whilst he hesitated, the notary, little suspecting what had occurred, began—

'So you have taken possession monsieur. These military men are prompt, are they not mademoiselle?'

'Do not speak to me monsieur,' said Josephine quietly.

'Why not? We ought to entertain our guests.'

'Mademoiselle is at home,' said Raynal sternly; 'address her with respect, or she will perhaps order you out.'

'She is very capable monsieur,' said the notary, 'but luckily she has no one to order.'

'Don't be too sure of that,' said Raynal.

The notary looked round uneasily, expecting to see young Riviere. He turned the conversation.

'Mademoiselle,' said he in a mere tone of business, 'it is my duty as M. Raynal's agent to inform you, that whatever moveables you have removed are yours; those that we find in the house upon entering are ours;' and he grinned.

'And as we are not going to enter for a week or two, if at all, you will have plenty of time to shift your chairs and tables,' explained Raynal.

'Monsieur,' said the notary, 'really I do not understand you. Have I done anything to merit this? Have I served you so ill that you withdraw your confidence from me?'

'No,' said Raynal, 'but you exceed your powers my lad. I command—you obey.'

'So be it monsieur. What are your orders, and what on earth is the meaning of all this?'

'The meaning is this. I want mademoiselle and her family to stay here while I go to Egypt with the First Consul. Mademoiselle makes difficulties —it offends her delicacy.'

'Comedie!'

'Though her mother's life depends on her staying here.'

'Comedie!'

'Her pride is like to be too much for her affection.'

'Farce!'

'I pitched upon you to reconcile the two.'

'Then you pitched upon the wrong man,' said Perrin bluntly. He added obsequiously, 'I am too much your friend.'

Raynal frowned.

'I will never abet you in such a sin. She has been talking you over no doubt; but you have a friend, an Ulysses, who is deaf to the syren's voice. I will be no party to such a transaction. I will not co-operate to humbug my friend and rob him of his rights.'

'Then be off, that's a good soul, and send me a more accommodating notary.'

'A more accommodating notary!' screamed Perrin, stung to madness by this reproach. 'There is not a more accommodating notary in Europe. Ungrateful man! is this the return for all my zeal, my integrity, my unselfishness? Is there another agent in the world who would have let such a bargain as Beaurepaire fall into your hands? Oh! it serves me right for deviating from the rules of business. Send me another agent—oh!!!!'

The honest soldier was confused. The lawyer's eloquence overpowered him. He felt guilty. Josephine saw his simplicity and made a cut with a woman's two-edged sword.

'Monsieur,' said she coolly, 'do you not see it is an affair of money? This is a way of saying pay me double the usual charge!'

'And I'll pay him double!' cried Raynal catching the idea; 'don't be alarmed, I'll pay you handsomely.'

'And my zeal—my devotion?'

'Put 'em in figures, my lad.'

'And my prob—?'

'Add it up!'

'And my integ—?'

'Add them all together—and don't bother me.

'I see! I see! my poor soldier. You are no match for a woman's tongue.'

'Nor a notary's! Go to h—, and send in your

bill,' roared the soldier in fury. 'Well, will you go, or must I'—and he marched at him.

The notary scuttled out, with something between a snarl and a squeak.

Josephine hid her face in her hands.

'What is the matter with you? Crying again? Well it is you for crying.'

'Me! monsieur. I never cry—hardly. No. I hid my face because—he! he!'

'Haw! haw!'

'You frightened me, monsieur,' said Josephine, suddenly assuming a small reproachful air. 'I was afraid you would beat him.'

'No! no! a good soldier never leathers a civilian, if he can possibly help it—it looks so bad; and before a lady! You must not think I know nothing.'

'I would have forgiven you monsieur,' said Josephine, with tender benignity, and something like a little sun danced in her eye.

'Now mademoiselle, since my friend has proved a pig, it is your turn. Choose you a friend.'

'We have but one fit, and he is so young. Ah! how stupid I am. You know him. Monsieur is doubtless the commandant of whom I once heard him speak with such admiration—his name is Riviere—Edouard Riviere.'

'Know him! he is my best officer, out and out.'

'I am so glad. Would it be derogatory on

the part of monsieur to admit one so young and in a subordinate position?'

'Ah, bah! It is not I who makes difficulties: it is you. Riviere be it. But where is he? for I have given the young dog leave of absence.'

'He is at a farm-house near Rennes, at his uncle's.'

'Well I am going home. I will send him a note. We will confer, and we will arrange this mighty affair. My general would settle a kingdom in the time we take. Meantime tell the old lady to pluck up spirit. My mother used to say, "a faint heart makes its own troubles."'

'Oh, what a wise saying!'

'Say we are none of us dead yet, nor like to be, and mademoiselle let me hear you say courage?'

'Courage!'

'Yes! only just six times as loud and hearty, "Courage."'

'How good he is, "Cou-rage!"—there!'

'Good! on that behold me gone.' Clink, clank, clank, clink, clatter, clatter, clank.

Josephine came into the saloon radiant.

'Well! well!' was the cry.

'Mamma, he offered us the house again: I declined Laure—Oh, yes I declined firmly.'

'Are you mad my poor Josephine?' cried the baroness in dismay.

'No mamma; then he proposed to refer all this to a third person, and he tried Monsieur Perrin.

The man arrived just in time to reveal his nature and be dismissed with ignominy.'

General exultation.

'Then he was so good as to let me choose a referee, and I chose Edouard Riviere.'

This announcement caused a great sensation.

'He is very young,' demurred the baroness, 'but you know more of him than I do.'

'I know this, that he will not let you be turned out of Beaurepaire!'

'Then I shall love him well.'

'Is that a promise, mother?'

'That it is!'

'A promise made to your Josephine before these witnesses?'

'A promise made to my Josephine,' said she, and she looked at Laure.

That young lady kept her eyes steadily down on her work.

The notary went home gnashing his teeth. His whole life of success was turned to wormwood this day. Raynal's parting commissions rang in his ear: in his bitter mood the want of logical sequence in the two orders disgusted him.

He inverted them.

He sent in a thundering bill the very next morning, and postponed the other commission till his dying day.

Edouard Riviere was with difficulty prevailed on to stay the rest of the evening at his uncle's. Sorrow for his friends and mortification at his own defeat weighed him down.

He shook hands with his uncle, and flung himself recklessly on his horse: the horse being rather fresh bolted off with him as soon as he touched the saddle.

Some fool had left a wheel-barrow on his road: and just as Edouard was getting his foot into the off stirrup the horse shied violently, and threw Edouard on the stones of the courtyard. He jumped up in a moment and laughed at Marthe's terror; meantime a farm-servant caught the nag and brought him back to his work.

When Edouard went to put his hand on the saddle, he found it would not obey him. 'Wait a minute—my arm is benumbed.'

'Let me see!' said the farmer himself, 'benumbed? yes; and no wonder poor boy. Jacques get on his horse and ride for the surgeon!'

'Are you mad, uncle?' cried Edouard. 'I can't spare my horse, and I want no surgeon: it will be well directly.'

'It will be worse before it is better, my poor lad.'

'I don't know what you mean uncle; it is only numbed, ah! it hurts when I rub it.'

'It is worse than numbed Edouard: it is broken!'

'Broken, uncle? nonsense:' and he looked at

it in piteous bewilderment, 'how can it be broken? it does not hurt except when I touch it.'

'It *will* hurt: I know all about it. I broke mine fifteen years ago: fell off a haystack.'

'Oh how unfortunate I am! But I will go to Beaurepaire all the same. I can have it mended there, as well as here.'

'You will go to bed: that is where you will go.'

'I'll go to blazes sooner.'

The old man made a signal to his myrmidons whom Marthe's exclamation had brought around, and four stout fellows took old of Edouard by the legs and the left shoulder and carried him up stairs raging and kicking, and deposited him on a bed.

He began to feel faint and that made him more reasonable.

They cut his coat off, and put him in a loose wrapper, and after a considerable delay the surgeon came and set his arm skilfully, and behold this ardent spirit caged.

He chafed and fretted and retarded his cure. And oh! he was so peevish and fretful. Passive fortitude, he did not know what it meant.

It was two days after his accident. He was lying on his back environed by slops cursing his evil fate and fretting his soul out of its fleshly prison, when suddenly he heard a cheerful trombone saying three words to Marthe, then came a clink clank, and Marthe ushered into the sick-room

the Commandant Raynal. The sick man raised himself in bed, with great surprise and joy.

'Oh commandant, this is kind to come and see your poor officer in hell!'

'Ah,' cried Raynal, 'you see I know what it is. I have been chained down by the arm, and the leg, and all—it is tiresome.'

'Tiresome! it is—it is—oh dear commandant, Heaven bless you for coming!'

'La! la! la! Besides I am come on business.'

'All the better. I have nothing to do—that is what kills me—but to eat my own heart.'

'Cannibal, go to. Well my lad, since you are in that humour, cheer up, for I bring you a job, and a tough one—it has puzzled me.'

'What is it, commandant? What is it?'

'Well. Do you know a house and a family called Beaurepaire?'

'Do I know Beaurepaire?'

CHAPTER III.

'A LETTER for mademoiselle.'

'Ah!'

'No, not for you Mademoiselle Laure, for mademoiselle.'

'*Mademoiselle,—Before I could find time to write to our referee, news came in that he had just broken his arm, so I—*'

'Oh! oh! dear—our poor Edouard!'

And if poor Edouard had seen the pale faces, and heard the faltering accents, it would have reconciled him to his broken arm almost. This hand grenade the commandant had dropped so coolly among them, it was a long while ere they could recover from it enough to read the rest of the letter:—

'*so I rode over to him, and found him on his back fretting for want of something to do. I told him the whole story. He undertook the business. I have received his secret instructions, and next week shall be at his quarters to clear off his arrears of business, and make acquaintance with all your family, if they permit.*

'RAYNAL.'

As the latter part of this letter seemed to require a reply, the baroness wrote a polite note, and Jacintha sent Dard to leave it for the commandant at Riviere's lodgings. But first they all sat down and wrote kind and pitying and soothing letters to Edouard. Need I say these letters fell upon him like balm?

Next week Raynal called on the baroness. She received him alone. They talked about Madame Raynal. The next day he dined with the whole party, and the commandant's manners were the opposite of what the baroness had inculcated. But she had a strong prejudice in his favour. Had her feelings been the other way his *brusquerie* would have shocked her. It amused her. If people's hearts are with you, *that* for their heads! In common with them all she admired his frank and manly sincerity. He came every day for a week, chatted with the baroness, walked with the young ladies, and when after work he came over in the evening, Laure used to cross-examine him: and out came such descriptions of battles and sieges, such heroism and such simplicity mixed, as made the evening pass delightfully. On these occasions the young ladies fixed their glowing eyes on him, and drank in his character as well as his narrative, in which were fewer 'I's' than in any thing of the sort you ever read.

Thus they made acquaintance and learned to know and esteem him.

Josephine said to her mother—'Tell me mamma, are there many such men in the world?'

'He is charming,' replied the old lady, somewhat vaguely.

'He is a man of crystal: he never says a word he does not mean.'

'Why Josephine!' said Laure, 'have you not observed he always means more than he says, and does more?'

'I wish I was like him,' sighed Josephine.

'No I thank you,' said the baroness hastily, 'he is a man: a thorough man. He would make an intolerable woman. A fine life if one had a parcel of women about one all blurting out their real minds every moment, and never smoothing matters.'

'Mamma what a horrid picture!' cried Laure.

'Josephine,' said the baroness, 'you are the favourite I think.'

'Oh no! mamma, you are the favourite you know.'

'Well: perhaps I am,' and she smiled. 'But he has already opened the subject with you, never with me.'

Jacintha came in and interrupted the conversation: 'Mademoiselle, the commandant is in the Pleasance.'

'Well?'

'He would be glad to speak to you.'

'I will come.'

'How droll he is,' said Laure; 'fancy his sending for a young lady like that: he is like nobody else. Don't go Josephine: how he would stare.'

'My dear I no more dare disobey him, than if I was one of his soldiers.'

'Well, go to your commanding officer.'

'He comes *apropos*. I was just going to tell you to ask him what Edouard has proposed about Beaurepaire?'

'I will try mamma. But indeed I hope he will speak first, for what else can he want me for?'

After the first salutation, there was a certain hesitation about Raynal which Josephine had never seen a trace of in him before. So to put him at his ease and at the same time please her mother, she began—

'Monsieur, has our friend Edouard been able to suggest anything?'

'What, don't you know that I have been acting all along upon his instructions?'

'No indeed! and you have not told us what he advised!'

'Told you? why of course not—they were secret instructions.'

'And do you mean to obey them?'

'To the letter! I have obeyed one set, and now I come to the other, and there is the difficulty.'

'But is not this inverting the order of things for you to obey that boy?'

'A man is no soldier unless he can obey as well as command, and in every thing somebody must command. He is very shrewd in these matters that boy: and my only fear is that I shall fall short in carrying out his orders—not from want of good will, but of skill and experience.'

Josephine looked thoroughly mystified.

'You see mademoiselle it is a kind of warfare I know nothing about.'

'It must be a savage warfare then.'

'No! it is not. I don't know how to begin: by all the devils I am afraid.' And he stared with surprise at himself.

'That must be a new sensation to you monsieur. I think I understand you: you fear a repulse, you meditate some act of singular delicacy.'

'No! rather the reverse.'

'Of generosity then?'

'No, by St. Denis! Confound the young dog, why is he not here to help me?'

'But after all you have only to carry out his instructions.'

'That is true! that is true! but when one is a coward, a poltroon.'

This repeated assertion of cowardice on the part of the living Damascus blade that stood bolt upright before her struck Josephine as so funny that she laughed merrily.

'Fancy it is only a fort you are attacking instead of the terrible me—he! he!'

'Thank you,' cried Raynal warmly, 'you are very good to put in an encouraging word like that!' and the soldier rallied visibly. '*Allons!*' he cried, 'it is only a fort—Mademoiselle!'

'Monsieur!'

'Hum! will you lend me your hand for a moment?'

'My hand, what for?—there,' and she put it out an inch a minute.

He took hold of it.

'A charming hand! the hand of a virtuous woman?'

'Yes!' said Josephine, as cool as a cucumber, too sublimely and absurdly innocent even to blush.

'Is it your own?'

'Monsieur!'—she blushed at that I can tell you.

'Because if it was, I would ask you to give it me. I've done it!'

Josephine whipped it off his palm, where it lay like cream spilt on a table.

'Ah! I see you are not free: you have a lover?'

'No! no!' cried Josephine in distress, 'I love nobody but my mother and sister; I never shall.'

'Your mother! that reminds me. He told me to ask her; by Jove I think he told me to ask her first,' and he up with his scabbard and ran off.

Josephine begged him not to.

'I can save you the trouble,' said she.

'Oh! I don't mind a little trouble. My instructions! my instructions!' and he ran into the house.

Laure came out the next moment, for the soldier had demanded a *tête-à-tête* abruptly.

She saw her sister walking pensively, and ran to her.

'Oh! Laure, he has!!!!'

'Heaven forbid!'

'It is not his fault; it is your Edouard who set him to do it.'

'My Edouard? Don't talk in that horrid way; I have no Edouard. You said "no" of course.'

'Something of the kind.'

'Something of the kind! What, did you not say "no" plump?'

'I did not say it brutally, dear.'

'Josephine you frighten me. I know you can't say "no" to any one; and if you don't say "no" plump to such a man as this you might as well say "yes."'

'Indeed I said nothing that could be construed into consent.'

This did not quite satisfy Laure, and she dilated on the advantages of a plump 'negative,' and half scolded Josephine for not having learned to say 'no' plump to anybody.

'Well love,' said Josephine, 'our mother will relieve me of all this. What a comfort to have a mother!'

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

'Oh yes! but why lean on her? You are always for leaning on somebody.'

'What, may not I lean on my own mother?'

'No; learn to lean on nobody—but me.'

Raynal came out of the house, and walked up to the sisters.

Laure seized Josephine, and held her tight, and cast hostile glances.

'Now hold your tongue Josephine; you can't say "no" plump: leave it to me.'

'With all my heart,' said Josephine.

'Monsieur,' said Laure, before he could speak, 'even if she had not declined, we could not consent—so you see.'

'I have no instructions to ask your consent,' said Raynal brusquely.

Laure coloured high.

'Is her own consent to be dispensed with too? She declined the honour, did she not?'

'Of course she did; but my instructions are not to take the first two or three refusals.'

'Oh! Josephine, it is that insolent boy who sets him on!'

'Insolent boy!' cried Raynal angrily; 'why it is the referee of your own choosing, and as well behaved a lad as ever I saw, and a zealous officer.'

'My friends,' put in Josephine, with a sweet languor, 'I cannot let you quarrel about a straw.'

'It is not a straw,' said Raynal, 'it is you.'

'The distinction involves a compliment. Laure, you who are so shrewd, is it possible you do not see Monsieur Raynal's strange proposal in its true light? This generous man has no personal feeling in this eccentric proceeding: he wishes to make us all happy, especially my mother, without seeming to lay us under too great an obligation. Surely good nature was never carried so far before. Ah! monsieur, I will encumber you with my friendship for ever, if you permit me, but farther than that I will not abuse your generosity.'

'Now look here, mademoiselle,' began Raynal bluntly, 'I did start with a good motive at first, that I confess. But since I have been every day in your company, and seen how good and kind you are to all about you, I have turned selfish; and I say to myself, what a comfort such a wife as you would be to a soldier! Why only to have you to write letters home to, would be worth half a fellow's pay. Do you know sometimes when I see the fellows writing their letters it gives me a knock here to think I have no one at all to write to.'

'Ah!'

'So you see I am not so disinterested. Now mademoiselle, you speak so charmingly I can't tell what you mean: can't tell whether you say "no," because you could never like me, or whether it is out of delicacy, and you only want pressing. So I say no more: it is a standing offer. Take a day

to consider. Take two if you like. I must go to the barracks. By-the-by your mother has consented—good day.'

He was gone ere they could recover the amazement his last words caused them.

'Oh! this must be put an end to at once, Josephine.'

'Certainly—if possible.'

'Will you speak to our mother, or shall I?'

'Oh, you!'

'Coward!'

'No, love; but you have always energy, and will. I can burst out on great emergencies; but I cannot always be fighting.'

'Oh! sister; and is not this a great emergency?'

'Yes: I ought to feel it one; but I don't—I can't.'

'I can then.'

'That is fortunate. You then are the one to act. You settle it with my mother.'

'I will. Well, where are you going?'

'Up stairs, love.'

'Wretch! do you think I will go to our mother without you?'

'As you please.'

They entered the room, Laure asking herself in some agitation how she should begin.

To their surprise they found the baroness walking up and down the room with unusual alacrity.

She no sooner caught sight of Josephine than she threw her arms open to her with joyful vivacity, and kissed her warmly.

'My Josephine it is you who save us. I am a happy old woman. If I had all France to pick from I could not have found a man so worthy of my Josephine. He is brave, he is handsome, he is a rising man, he is a good son, and good sons make good husbands—and—I shall die at Beaurepaire, shall I not madame the commandante?'

Josephine held her mother round the neck, but never spoke. After a silence she held her tighter, and cried a little.

'What is it?' asked the baroness confidentially of Laure, but without showing much concern.

'Mamma! mamma! she does not love him!'

'Love him? Heaven forbid! She would be no daughter of mine if she loved a man at sight. A modest woman loves her husband only.'

'But she scarcely knows Monsieur Raynal.'

'She knows more of him than I knew of your father when I married him. She knows his virtues and appreciates them. I have heard her, have I not love? Esteem soon ripens into love when they are once fairly married.'

'Mother, does her silence then tell you nothing? Her tears—are they nothing to you?'

'Silly child! These are tears that do not scald. The sweet soul weeps because she now for the first time sees she will have to leave her mother.

Alas! my eldest, it is inevitable. This is Nature's decree. Sooner or later the young birds must leave the parent nest. Mothers are not immortal. While they are here it is their duty to choose good husbands for their daughters. My youngest chose for herself—I consented. But for my eldest I choose. We shall see which chose the best. Meantime we stay at Beaurepaire—thanks to my treasure here.'

'Josephine! Josephine! you say nothing,' cried Laure in dismay.

'*Mon Dieu!* what can I say? I love my mother and I love you. You draw me different ways. I want you to be both happy.'

'Then if you will not speak out I must. My mother do not deceive yourself: it is duty alone that keeps her silent: this match is odious to her.'

'Then we are ruined! Josephine is this match odious to you?'

'Not exactly odious, mother: but I am very, very indifferent.'

'There!' cried Laure triumphantly.

'There!' cried the baroness in the same breath, triumphantly. 'She esteems his character: but his person is indifferent to her: in other words she is a modest girl, and my daughter; and let me tell you Laure, that but for the misfortunes of our house, both my daughters would be married as I was, without knowing half as much of their

husbands as Josephine knows of this brave, honest, generous, filial gentleman.'

'Gentleman!'

'You are right: I should have said noble, by the heart.'

'Well then, since she will not speak out, I will. Pity me: I love her so. If this stranger, whom she does not love mamma, takes her away from us, he will kill me. I shall die—oh!'

Josephine left her mother and went to console Laure.

The baroness lost her temper at this last stroke of opposition.

'Now the truth comes out Laure, this is selfishness. Do not deceive *your*self—selfishness!'

'Mamma!'

'You are only waiting to leave me yourself. Yet your elder sister, forsooth, must be kept here for you!—till then.' She added more gently, 'let me advise you to retire to your own room, and examine your heart fairly.'

'I will.'

'You will find there is a strong dash of egoism in all this.'

'If I do—'

'You will retract your opposition.'

'My heart won't let me: but I will despise myself, and be silent.'

And the young lady, who had dried her eyes the moment she was accused of selfishness walked,

head erect, from the room. Josephine cast a deprecating glance at her mother.

'Yes, my angel!' said the latter, 'I was harsh. But we are no longer of one mind, and I suppose never shall be again.'

'Oh yes, we shall. Be patient! My mother—you shall not leave Beaurepaire!'

The baroness coloured faintly at these four last words of her daughter, and hung her head.

Josephine saw that, and darted to her and covered her with kisses.

'What have you been doing to your mother dears? her pulse is very high.'

'We had a discussion.'

'Then have no more discussions: we have tried her too much with our discussions lately. A little more of this agitation, and I foresee a palpitation of the heart.'

'Oh let me go to her!' cried Laure.

'On the contrary, do pray let her be quiet. I have sent her to lie down till dinner time. But you really must adopt a course with her, and adhere to it.'

'We will, we will. What shall we do?'

'Let her have her own way. She won't be here so very long that we should thwart her. I repent my share in it: my dears I do not like her symptoms.'

'Oh, doctor! my darling mother.'

'Depend upon it, her mind is not at rest. She is not easy yet about Beaurepaire. In her heart she thinks she will be turned adrift upon the world some day, and with as little warning as that Satan of a notary gave her: that morning's work has shaken her all to pieces.'

Laure sighed, Josephine smiled.

The commandant did not come to dinner as usual. The evening passed heavily: their hearts were full of uncertainty.

'We miss our merry spirited companion,' said the baroness with a grim look at Laure. Both young ladies assented with ludicrous eagerness.

That night Laure came and slept with Josephine, and more than once she awoke with a start and seized Josephine convulsively and held her tight.

The commandant did not come for his answer next day, but in his place a letter to say he was obliged to go to head-quarters for two days, but would then return and attack the fort again until it should capitulate. Between the discussion with her mother and the receipt of this letter, Laure had been very sad, and very thoughtful. Accused of egoism! at first her whole nature rose in arms against the charge: but after awhile, coming as it did from so revered a person, it forced her to serious self-examination. The poor girl said to herself—'Mamma is a shrewed woman. Am I after all deceiving myself? Would she be happy,

and am I standing in the way?' She begged her sister to walk with her in the park, that so they might be safe from interruption.

'I am in deep perplexity: I cannot understand my own sister. Why are you so calm, and cold, while I am in tortures of anxiety? Have you made some resolve and not confided it to your Laure?'

'No love. I am scarce capable of a resolution—I drift.'

'Let me put it in other words then. How will this end?'

'I hardly know.'

'Shall you marry Monsieur Raynal then? answer me that.'

'I should not be surprised if he were to marry *me*.'

'But you said "no."'

'Yes I said "no" once.'

'And don't you mean to say it again?'

'What is the use? you heard him say he would not desist any the more, and I care too little to persist.'

'Why not, if he goes on pestering you?'

'He is like you—all energy, at all hours. I have so little where my heart is unconcerned: he seems too to have a wish: I have none either way, and my conscience says "marry him!"'

'Your conscience says marry one man, loving another?'

Heaven forbid! sister, I love no one: I have loved, but now my heart is dead and says nothing: and my conscience says, "you are the cause of all your mother's trouble: you are the cause that Beaurepaire was sold. Now you can repair that mischief and at the same time make a brave man happy, our benefactor happy." It is a great temptation: I hardly know why I said "no" at all, surprise perhaps—or to please you pretty one.'

Laure groaned.

'Are you then worth so little that you would throw yourself away on a man who does not love you?'

'He will love me: I see that.'

'He does not want you, he is perfectly happy as he is.'

'Laure he is not happy: he is only stout hearted and good, and therefore content: and he is a character that it would be easy—in short, I feel my power here: I could make that man happy: he has nobody to write to even when he is away—poor fellow!'

I shall lose my patience, Josephine: you, are at your old trick, thinking of everybody but yourself: I let you do it in trifles, but I love you too well to permit it when the happiness of your whole life is at stake. I must be satisfied on one point: or else this marriage shall never take place: I will say three words to this Raynal that will end it. I leave you to guess what those words will be.'

'My poor Laure,' replied Josephine, 'you will not: for if you do my mother and Monsieur Raynal will be the sufferers: as for me, it gives me pain to refuse him, but I should have no objection whatever to be refused by him.'

'Oh, this monstrous, this stony indifference! there I threaten no more, I entreat: my sister be frank with me unless I have lost your affection.'

'I will speak to you Laure as I would to an angel.'

'Then show me the bottom of your heart.'

'How can I do that?'

'What do you mean?'

'I cannot fathom my own heart!'

'Josephine!'

'Yours love I can, or our mother's, or Monsieur Raynal's, anybody's, but not my own. Can you yours?'

'Well! well! then don't, but just answer me this, and I'll read you: if Camille Dujardin stood on one side and Monsieur Raynal on the other, and both asked your hand, which would you take?'

'That will never be. Whose? Not his whom I despise. Esteem might ripen into love, but what must contempt end in?'

I am satisfied; yet one question more and I have done. Suppose Camille should turn out to be not quite—what shall I say—inexcusable?'

'All the world should not separate me from him. Why torture me with such a question? Ah! I

see—Oh, Heaven! you have heard something. I was blind. This is why you would save me from this unnatural marriage. You are breaking the good news to me by degrees. There is no need. Quick—quick—let me have it. I have waited three years. I am sick of waiting. Why don't you speak? Why don't you tell me? Then I will tell *you.* He is alive—he is well—he is coming. It was not he those soldiers saw; they were so far off. How could they tell? They saw an uniform but not a face. Perhaps he has been a prisoner, and so could not write—could not come. But he is coming now. Why do you groan?—why do you turn pale?—ah! I see—I have once more deceived myself. I was mad. He I love is still a traitor to France and me, and I am wretched for ever. Oh! that I were dead!—oh! that I were dead! No—don't speak to me—never mind me; this madness will pass as it has before, and leave me a dead thing among the living—and so best. Oh! sister, why did you wake me from my dream? I was drifting so calmly, so peacefully, so dead, and painless—drifting over the dead sea of the heart towards the living waters of gratitude and duty. I was going to make more than one worthy soul happy; and seeing them happy I should have been content and useful—what am I now?—and comforted other hearts, and died joyful—and young—for God is good. He releases the good and patient from their burdens!'

With this, quiet tears came to the poor girl's relief. The short-lived storm was lulled, and Patience began to creep slowly back to her seat in this large heart.

'Accursed be that man's name, and cursed be my tongue if ever I utter it again in your hearing,' cried Laure. 'You are wiser than I, and every way better. Oh! Josephine love, dry your tears. Here he comes: look! riding across the park.'

'Laure,' cried Josephine hastily, 'I leave all to you. Receive Monsieur Raynal, and decline his offer if you think proper. It is you who love me best. My mother would give me up for a house—for an estate—poor dear!'

'I would not give you for all the world.'

'I know it. I trust all to you. Whatever you decide I will adhere to, upon my honour,' and she moved towards the house.

'Well but don't go; stay and hear what I shall say.'

'Oh! no; the sight of that poor man is intolerable to me *now*. Let me think of his virtues.'

Laure was left alone, mistress of her sister's fate. She put her head into her hands and thought with all her soul—'What shall I do?'

That now fell on Laure which has in like manner taken by surprise all of us who are not utter fools—doubt.

She was positive so long as the decision did not

rest with her. Easy to be an advocate *in re incerta* —hard to be the judge.* So long as Laure was opposed she had seen the '*cons*' only, but now the '*pros*' came rushing upon her mind.

'What awful power a man has over a woman!! I shall never cure my sister of this fatal passion. A husband might. No happiness for her unless she is cured of it. Our mother prays for it—he wishes it. She was indifferent, or not averse, before I was so mad as to disturb her judgment with that rascal, whose name she shall never hear again: and she will return to that tranquil state in a day or two. Well then—that she should lose me, and I her, for one she does not love, nor he her! How can I decide? and here he is—Heaven guide me!'

'Well little lady,' cried the cheerful horn, 'and how are you and how is my mother-in-law that is to be—or is not to be, as your sister pleases; and how is *she?* have I frightened her away? There were two petticoats; and now there is but one.'

'Oh! no monsieur: but she left me to answer you.'

'All the worse for me: I am not to your taste.'

'Monsieur do not say that.'

* Were you ever a member of the Opposition, satirical and positive? and did an adroit minister, whom you had badgered over much, ever say suddenly to you, with a twinkle in his eye, 'You are right my lads, govern the country?' And on that did your great heart collapse like a pricked bladder? and did your poor little head find out that it is easy to see and say one side of things three sided, but the hardest thing on earth to balance alternatives—Eh?

'Oh! it is not sacrilege not to like me. Not one in fifty does. I forgive you, haw! haw! we can't all have good taste.'

'But I do like you Monsieur Raynal.'

'Then why won't you let me have your sister?'

'I have not quite decided that you shall not have her.'

'All the better.'

'I dare say you think me very unkind, very selfish, and you are not the only one who calls me that.'

'*Selfish?* I don't know what you mean.'

'Yes you do. Oh! you don't think what I must feel, I who love my sister as no man can ever love her; I whose heart has been one flesh and one soul with hers all my life. A stranger comes and takes her away from me as if she was nothing.'

'It is too bad!' cried Raynal, good-naturedly; 'as you say, I am a comparative stranger: still it is not as if I was going to part you two.'

'Not separate us?—when you take her to Egypt.'

'I shall not take her to Egypt.'

'Yes you will—you know you will.'

'What do you think I am such a brute as to take that delicate creature out fighting with me? no it won't be fighting: you mark my words, it will be hunting Egyptians and Arabs—why the hot sand would choke her, to begin.'

'Oh! my good Monsieur Raynal! what then you do not tear her from us?'

'No. You don't take my manœuvre. I have no family. I try for a wife that will throw me in a mother and sister. You will live altogether the same as before, of course; only you must let me make one of you when I am at home. And how often will that be? Besides, I am as likely to be knocked on the head in Egypt as not; you are worrying yourself for nothing little lady.'

Raynal uttered the last topic of consolation in a broad, hearty, hilarious tone, like a trombone thoroughly impregnated with cheerful views of fate.

'Heaven forbid!' cried Laure: 'and it will, for I shall pray for you now. Ah! monsieur forgive me!'

'Yes, I forgive you—stop! what am I forgiving you for?'

'What for? why not for not seeing all your worth: of course I knew you were an angel, but I had no idea you were a duck. You are just the man for my sister. She likes to obey: you are all for commanding. So you see. Then she never thinks of herself: any other man but you would impose on her good nature; but you are too generous to do that. So you see. Then she esteems you so highly.'

'Short, you are her plenipotentiary, and you say "yes."'

'Why should I say "no?" you will make one another happy some day: you are both so good. Any other man but you would tear her from me; but you are too just, too kind. Heaven will reward you. No! I will. I will give you Josephine: ah my dear brother-in-law I give you there the most precious thing I have in the world.'

'Thank you then. So that is settled. Hum! no it is not quite: I forgot: I have something for you to read: an anonymous letter. I got it this morning: it says your sister has a lover—read it.'

The letter ran to this tune: a friend who had observed the commandant's frequent visits at Beaurepaire wrote to warn him against traps. Both the young ladies of Beaurepaire were doubtless at the new proprietor's service to pick and choose from. But for all that each of them had a lover, and though these lovers had their orders to keep out of the way till monsieur should be hooked, he might be sure that if he married either, the man of her heart would come on the scene soon after, perhaps be present at the wedding.

In short it was one of those poisoned arrows a coarse vindictive coward can shoot.

It was the first anonymous letter Laure had ever seen. It almost drove her mad on the spot. Raynal was sorry he had let her see it.

She turned red and white by turns, and gasped for breath.

'Oh! why am I not a man?—why don't I wear

a sword. I would pass it through this caitiff's heart. The cowardly slave!—the fiend! for who but a fiend could slander an angel like my Josephine? Hooked? Oh! she will never marry you if she sees this.'

'Then don't let her see it, and don't take it to heart like that. I don't trust to the word of a thief, who owns that this story is a thing he dare not sign his name to; at all events I shall not put his word against yours. But this is why I put the question to you. I am an honest man, but not a *complaisant* one. I should not be an easy-going husband like some I see about. I'd have no wasps round my honey. If my wife took a lover I would not lecture the woman—what is the use? I'd kill the man then and there; I'd kill him in doors or out; I'd kill him as I would kill a snake. If she took another I'd send him after the first, and so on till one killed me.'

'And serve the wretches right.'

'Yes, but for my own sake I don't choose to marry a woman that loves any other man. So tell me, come.'

'Monsieur, the letter is a wicked slander. I have no lover. I have a young fool that comes and teases me: but it is no secret. He is away, but why? he is on a sick-bed, poor little fellow.'

'But your sister?'

'My sister? ask my mother whether she has a lover.'

'What for? I ask you. She would not have a lover unknown to you.'

'I defy her. Well monsieur, I have not seen her speak three words to any young man except Monsieur Riviere this three years past.'

'That is enough,' and he tore the letter quietly to atoms.

Then Laure saw she could afford a little more candour:—

'Understand me, I can't speak of what happened when I was a child. But if ever she had a girlish attachment, he has not followed it up, or surely I should have seen something of him all these years.'

'*Parbleu*—oh! as for flirtations, let them pass: a lovely girl does not grow up without one or two whispering some nonsense into her ear. Why I myself should have flirted often, but I never had the time. Bonaparte gives you time to eat and drink, but not to sleep or flirt, and that reminds me I have fifty miles to ride, so good-bye sister-in-law, eh?'

'Adieu, brother-in-law.'

Left alone, Laure had some misgivings. She had equivocated with one whose upright candid nature ought to have protected him: but an enemy had accused Josephine; and it came so natural to shield her. 'Did he really think I would expose my own sister?' said she to herself angrily. Was not this anger secret self-content?

Laure was coming round a little to the match before this brisk interview with Raynal. His promise not to take Josephine to Egypt turned the scale. The anonymous letter, too, fired her with anger and resistance. 'So we have an enemy who tries to hinder him from marrying her!!!'

Irresolution was no part of this young lady's character. She did not decide blindly in so important a matter: but her decision once made, she banished objections and misgivings: the time for them was gone by, they had had their hearing.

She went to Josephine.

'Well love,' said Josephine, 'have you dismissed him?'

'No.'

Josephine smiled feebly. 'It is easy to say "say no:" but it is not so easy to say "no," especially when you feel you ought to say "yes," and have no wish either way except to give pleasure to others.'

'But I am not such skim milk,' replied Laure: 'I have always a strong wish where you are concerned, and your happiness. I hesitated whilst I was in doubt: but I doubt no longer: I have had a long talk with him: he has shown me his whole heart: he is the best, the noblest of creatures: he has no littleness or meanness. Also he is a thorough man; I know that by his being the very opposite of a woman in his ways: now you are a thorough woman, and you will suit one another to

a T. I have decided my Josephine: no more doubts love: no more tears: no more disputes: we are all of one mind.'

'All the better.'

'Embrace me, I love you! oh! never sister loved sister as I you: I have secured your happiness.'

'Never mind my happiness, think of our mother, think of—'

'Your happiness is before all. It will come! not all in a day perhaps, but it will come. So then in one little fortnight my sister—ah!—you marry Monsieur Raynal.'

'You have settled it?'

'Yes!'

'What—finally?'

'Yes.'

'But are you sure I can make him as happy as he deserves?'

'Positive.'

'I think so too; still—'

'It is settled dear,' said Laure soothingly.

'Oh! the comfort of that—you relieve me of a weight.'

'It is settled, love, and by me.'

'Then I am at peace. You are my best friend. I shall have duties; I shall do some good in the world. They were all for it but you before.'

'And now I am stronger for it than any one. It is settled.'

'Bless you dear Laure—you have saved your sister. OH! CAMILLE—CAMILLE!—WHY HAVE YOU ABANDONED ME!'

She fell to sobbing terribly. Laure wept on her neck, but said nothing. She too was a woman, and felt those despairing words were the woman's consent to marry him she esteemed but did not love. It was the last despairing cry of love giving up a hopeless struggle.

And in fact these were the last words that passed between the sisters.

It was settled.

And now Jacintha came to tell them it was close upon dinner time.

They hastened to dry their tears and wash their red eyes, for fear their mother should see what they had been at, and worry herself.

'Well mademoiselle, these two consent; but what do you say? for after all, it is you I am courting, and not them. Have you the courage to venture on a rough soldier like me?'

'Speak Josephine,' said the baroness.

For this delicate question was put plump before the three ladies.

'Monsieur,' said Josephine timidly, 'I will be as frank, as straightforward as you are. I thank you for the honour you do me.'

Raynal looked perplexed.

'Mother-in-law, does that mean yes or no?'

'I did not hear the word "no," did you?'

'Not downright "no!"'

'Then she means "yes."'

'Then I am very much obliged to her.'

'You have little reason to be monsieur.'

'Yes he has!' cried the baroness, 'and so have you my beloved child—my brave soldier I would have selected you for a son out of all the nations.'

'And I never saw an old lady, but one, that suited me for a mother like you.'

'You have but one fault: you never can stay quietly and chat.'

'That is Bonaparte's fault. I have got to go to him at Paris to-morrow.'

'So soon? but you stay with us this evening: I insist on it. I shall be hurt else.'

'All the evening. And just now I want to say something to you that I don't wish those two to hear, mother.'

'That is a hint my young ladies,' said the baroness.

'And a pretty broad one,' said Laure with a toss.

The details of this conversation between the baroness and Raynal did not transpire: but it left the baroness very happy, and at the same time much affected.

'He is an angel my dears,' cried she: 'he thinks of everything. I shall love all brusque people: and once I held them in such aversion. You are a

happy girl Josephine, and I am a happy old woman.'

Josephine brightened up at the old lady's joy, then she turned quickly to examine Laure; Laure's face beamed with unaffected happiness.

'Ah!' said Josephine complacently. She added 'and what a comfort to be all of one mind.'

The wedding was fixed for that day fortnight.

The next morning wardrobes were ransacked. The silk, muslin, and lace of their prosperous days were looked out: grave discussions were held over each work of art.

Laure was active, busy, fussy.

The baroness threw in the weight of her judgment and experience.

Josephine smiled whenever either Laure or the baroness looked at all fixedly at her.

So glided the peaceful days. So Josephine drifted towards the haven of wedlock.

CHAPTER IV.

At Bayonne, a garrison town on the south frontier of France, two sentinels walked lethargically, crossing and recrossing before the governor's house. Suddenly their official drowsiness burst into energy; they lowered their pieces and crossed them with a clash before the gateway. A pale, grisly man, in rusty, defaced, dirty, and torn regimentals, was walking into the courtyard really as if it belonged to him.

The battered man did not start back. He stopped and looked down with a smile at the steel barrier the soldiers had improvised for him, then drew himself a little up, carried his hand carelessly to his cap, which was nearly in two, and gave the name of an officer in the French army.

If you or I, dressed like a beggar, who years ago had stolen regimentals and worn them down to civil garments, had addressed these soldiers with these very same words, the bayonets would have kissed closer, or perhaps the points been turned

against our sacred but rusty person; but there is a freemasonry of the sword: the light imperious hand that touched that battered cap, and the quiet clear tone of command, told.

The soldiers slowly recovered their pieces, but still looked uneasy and doubtful in their minds. The battered one saw this, and gave a sort of lofty smile; he turned up his cuffs and showed his wrists, and drew himself still higher.

The sentinels shouldered their pieces sharp, then dropped them simultaneously with a clatter and ring upon the pavement.

'Pass captain.'

The battered rusty figure rang the governor's bell. A servant came and eyed him with horror and contempt. He gave his name and begged to see the governor.

The servant left him in the hall, and went up stairs to tell his master. At the name the governor reflected, then frowned, then bade his servant reach him down a certain book. He inspected it. 'I thought so: anyone with him?'

'No monsieur the governor.'

'Load my pistols: put them on the table: put that book back: show him in: and then order a guard to the door.'

The governor was a stern veteran with a powerful brow, a shaggy eyebrow, and a piercing eye. He never rose, but leaned his chin on his hand, and his elbow on a table that stood between

them : and eyed the new comer very fixedly and strangely.

'We did not expect to see you on this side the Pyrenees.'

'Nor I myself governor.'

'What do you come to me for ?'

'A welcome, a suit of regimentals, and money to take me to Paris.'

'And suppose instead of that, I turn out a corporal's guard, and bid them shoot you in the courtyard ?'

'It would be the drollest thing you ever did, all things considered,' said the other coolly, but he looked a little surprised.

The governor went for the book he had lately consulted, found the page, handed it to the rusty officer, and watched him keenly : the blood rushed all over his face, and his lip trembled : but his eye dwelt stern yet sorrowful on the governor.

'I have read your book : now read mine.' He drew off his coat and showed his wrists and arms, blue and whaled, 'can you read that monsieur ?'

'No !'

'All the better for you : Spanish fetters, general.' He showed a white scar on his shoulder. 'Can you read that sir ?'

'Humph !'

'This is what I cut out of it,' and he handed the governor a little round stone as big and almost as regular as a musket ball.

'Humph!—that could hardly have been fired from a French musket.'

'Can you read this?' and he showed him a long cicatrix on his other arm.

'Knife I think?' said the governor.

'You are right monsieur: Spanish knife. Can you read this?' and opening his bosom he showed a raw and bloody wound on his breast.

'Oh the devil!' cried the general.

The wounded man put his rusty coat on again, and stood erect, and haughty, and silent.

The general eyed him, and saw his great spirit shining through this man. The more he looked the less could the scarecrow veil the hero from his practised eye.

'There has been some mistake, or else I dote—and can't tell a soldier from a—'

'Don't say the word old man, or your heart will bleed.'

'Humph! I must go into this matter at once. Be seated captain if you please, and tell me what have you been doing all these years?'

'Suffering.'

'What all the time?'

'Without intermission.'

'But what? suffering what?'

'Cold, hunger, darkness, wounds, solitude, sickness, despair, prison, all that man can suffer.'

'Impossible; a man would be dead at that rate before this.'

'I should have died a dozen deaths but for one thing.'

'Ay! what was that?'

'I had promised to live.'

There was a pause. Then the old man said calmly, 'To the facts young man: I listen.'

An hour had scarce elapsed since the rusty figure was stopped by the sentinels at the gate, when two glittering officers passed out under the same archway, followed by a servant carrying a furred cloak. The sentinels presented arms. The elder of these officers was the governor: the younger was the late scarcecrow, in a bran new uniform belonging to the governor's son. He shone out now in his true light; the beau ideal of a patrician soldier; one would have said he had been born with a sword by his side and drilled by nature, so straight and smart, yet easy he was in every movement. He was like a falcon, eye and all, only as it were down at the bottom of the hawk eye seemed to lie a dove's eye. That compound and varying eye seemed to say: I can love, I can fight: I can fight, I can love, as few of you can do either.

The old man was trying to persuade him to stay at Bayonne, until his wound should be cured.

'No general, I have other wounds to cure of longer standing than this one.'

'Paris is a long journey for a wounded man.'

'Say a scratched man general.'

'Well, promise me to stay a month at Paris?'

'General, I shall stay an hour at Paris.'

'An hour in Paris!!! Well at least call at the War Office and present this letter.'

'I will.'

That same afternoon wrapped in the governor's furred cloak, the young officer lay at his full length in the *coupé* of the diligence, the whole of which the governor had peremptorily demanded for him, and rolled day and night towards Paris.

He reached it worn with fatigue and fevered by his wound, but his spirit as indomitable as ever. He went to the War Office with the governor's letter. It seemed to create some little sensation; one functionary came and said a polite word to him, then another. At last to his infinite surprise the minister himself sent down word he wished to see him; the minister put several questions to him, and seemed interested in him and touched by his relation.

'I think captain I shall have to send to you: where do you stay in Paris?'

'Nowhere monsieur—I leave Paris as soon as I can find an easy going horse.'

'But General Bretaux tells me you are wounded.'

'A little.'

'Pardon me captain, but is this prudent? is it just to yourself and your friends?'

'Yes monsieur, I owe it to those who perhaps think me dead.'

'You can write to them.'

'I grudge so great, so sacred a joy to a letter. No! after all I have suffered I claim to be the one to tell her I have kept my word: I promised to live, and I live.'

'Her? I say no more captain—only tell me what road you take.'

'The road to Brittany.'

As the young officer was walking his horse by the road side about a league and a half from Paris, he heard a clatter behind him, and up galloped an aide du camp, and drew up alongside, bringing his horse nearly on his haunches.

He handed him a large packet sealed with the arms of France. The other tore it open and there was his brevet as colonel. His cheek flushed and his eye glittered with joy. The aide du camp next gave him a parcel—

'Your epaulettes colonel! We hear you are going into the wilds where epaulettes don't grow. You are to join the army of the Rhine as soon as your wound is well.'

'Wherever my country calls me.'

'Your address, then, colonel, that we may know where to put our finger on a soldier when we want one.'

'I am going to Beaurepaire.'

'Ah! Beaurepaire? I never heard of it.'

'You never heard of Beaurepaire? Beaurepaire is in Brittany, twenty-five leagues from Paris, twenty-three leagues and a half from here.'

'Good! Health and honour to you colonel.'

'The same to you monsieur—or a soldier's death.'

The new colonel read the precious document across his horse's mane, and then he was going to put one of the epaulettes on his right shoulder, bare at present: but he reflected.

'No; I will not crown myself. She shall make me a colonel with her own dear hand. I will put them in my pocket. I will not even look at them till she has seen them; I have no right. Oh! how happy I am, not only to come back to her alive, but to come back to her honoured.'

His wound smarted, his limbs ached, but no pain past or present could lay hold of his mind. In his great joy he remembered past suffering and felt present pain—and smiled.

Only every now and then he pined for wings.

Oh! the weary road.

He was walking his horse quietly, drooping a little over his saddle, when another officer well mounted came after him and passed him at a hand gallop with one hasty glance at his uniform, and went tearing on like one riding for his life.

'Don't I know that face?' said he.

He cudgelled his memory, and at last he remembered it was the face of an old comrade. They had been lieutenants together.

'It *was* Raynal,' said he, 'only bronzed by service in some hot country. No wonder he did not know me. I must be more changed still. I wish I had hailed the fellow. Perhaps I shall fall in with him again at the next town.'

He touched his horse with the spur, and cantered gently on, for trotting shook him more than he could bear. Even when he cantered he had to press his hand against his bosom, and often with the motion a bitterer pang than usual came and forced the water from his eyes; and then he smiled.

His great love and his high courage made this reply to the body's idle anguish. And still his eyes looked straight forward as at some object in the distant horizon, while he came gently on, his hand pressed to his bosom, his head drooping now and then, smiling patiently, upon the road to Beaurepaire.

CHAPTER V.

At Beaurepaire they were making and altering wedding dresses. Laure was excited, and even Josephine took a calm interest. Dress never goes for nothing with her sex. The chairs and tables were covered with dresses, and the floor was littered.

'I wish you would think more of what you are to wear.'

'Of course you do,' said Laure: 'but that is selfish of you. You always want to have your own way, and your way is to be thinking of everybody before Josephine: but you shall not have your own way whilst I am here, because I am the mistress.'

'Nobody disputes that, love.'

'All the better for them dear. Now dear you really must work harder. It only wants five days to the wedding, and see what oceans we have to do!'

It was three o'clock in the afternoon: the baroness had joined her daughters, and was presiding over the rites of vanity, and telling them what she wore at her wedding, under

Louis XV., with strict accuracy, and what we men should consider a wonderful effort of memory, when the Commandant Raynal came in like a cannon ball, without any warning, and stood among them in a stiff military attitude. Exclamations from all the party, and then a kind greeting, especially from the baroness.

'We have been so dull without you Jean.'

'And I have missed you once or twice, mother-in-law, I can tell you. Well mother-in-law I am afraid I shall vex you, but you must consider we live in a busy time. To-morrow I start for Egypt!'

'Oh!' cried Laure.

'To-morrow!' cried the baroness.

Josephine put down her work quietly.

'Yes, it is all altered. Bonaparte leaves Paris the day after to-morrow at seven in the morning, and I go with him. I rode back here as fast as I could to spend what little time is left with you.'

The ladies' eyes all telegraphed one another in turn.

'My horse is a good one. If I start to-morrow at noon, I shall be at Paris by five in the morning —must be with Bonaparte at half-past five.'

The baroness sighed deeply, and the tears came into her eyes.

'Just as we were all beginning to know and love you.'

'Oh! you must not be downhearted, old lady.

Why I am as likely to come back from Egypt as not. It is an even chance, to say the least.'

This piece of consolation completed the baroness's unhappiness. She really had conceived a great affection for Raynal, and her heart had been set on the wedding.

These her motives were mixed; and so by-the-by are yours and mine, in nearly all we do—good, bad, or indifferent.

'Take away all that finery girls,' said she bitterly, 'we shall not want it for years. Ah! my friend I shall not be alive when you come home from Egypt. I shall never have a son.'

'What do you mean?' said Raynal a little roughly. 'It will be your own fault if you don't have a son; it shall not be mine.'

'I should rather ask what do you mean? You will be my friend and the betrothed of my daughter. But consider; but for this *contretemps* you really would have belonged to me in a few days' time. I should have had the right to put my finger on you and say—"This is my son." Alas! that name had become dear to me. I never had a son—only daughters—the best any woman ever had; but one is not complete without a son, and I shall never live to have one.'

Raynal looked puzzled. The young ladies were putting away the wedding things.

'I hate General Bonaparte,' said Laure viciously.

'Hate my general?' groaned Raynal, looking down with a sort of superstitious awe and wonder at the lovely vixen. 'Hate the best soldier the world ever saw?'

'What do I care for his soldiership? He has put off our wedding. For how many years did you say?'

'No; he has put it on.'

'And after me working my finger to the bone—put it on—what do you mean?'

'I mean the wedding was to be in a week, and now it is to be to-morrow at ten o'clock; that is putting it on I call.'

The three ladies set up their throats together.

'To-morrow?'

'To-morrow. Why what do you suppose I left Paris for yesterday? left my duties even.'

'What, monsieur?' asked Josephine, timidly, 'did you ride all that way, and leave your duties, merely to marry me?' and she looked a little pleased.

'You are worth a great deal more trouble than that,' said Raynal simply. 'Besides I had passed my word, and I always keep my word.'

'So do I monsieur,' said Josephine, a little proudly. 'I will not go from it now, if you insist; but I confess to you that such a proposal staggers me; so sudden—no preliminaries—no time to reflect; in short there are so many difficulties that I must request of your courtesy to reconsider.'

'Difficulties,' shouted Raynal with merry disdain; 'there are none unless you sit down and make them: difficulties? ? ha! ha! we do more difficult things than this every day of our lives: we passed the bridge of Arcola in thirteen minutes: and we had not the consent of the enemy: as we have now mademoiselle—have we not?'

'Monsieur it seems ungracious in me to raise objections, when you have taken so much trouble—but—mamma!!'

'Yes my daughter: my dear friend you do us both great honour by this *empressement*: but I see no possibility: there is an etiquette we cannot altogether defy: there are preliminaries before a daughter of the Baron de Beaurepaire—'

'There used to be all that, madame,' laughed Raynal putting her down good-humouredly, 'but it was in the days when armies came out and touched their caps to one another, and went back into winter quarters. Then the struggle was who could go slowest: now the fight is who can go fastest. Time and Bonaparte wait for nobody: and ladies and other strong places are taken by storm, not undermined a foot a month as under Noah Quatorze: let me cut this short as time is short: mademoiselle you say you are a woman of your word, and that if I insist you will give in: well I insist.'

'In that case monsieur all is said: I shall not resist you.'

'It would be no use,' cried Laure clapping her hands, 'he is irresistible.'

'You will not resist? that is all I require: now don't worry yourself: don't fancy difficulties: don't trouble yourself. I undertake everything: you will not have to lift a finger except to sign the marriage contract. As the time is short I cut it into rations beforehand: the carriages will be here at nine: they will whisk us down to the mayor's house by a quarter to ten: Picard the notary meets us there with the marriage contract to save time: the contract signed, the mayor will do the marriage at quick step out of respect for me and to save time—half an hour—quarter past ten; breakfast all in the same house an hour and a quarter:—we mustn't hurry a wedding breakfast—then ten minutes or so for the old fogies to waste in making speeches about our virtues mademoiselle—yours and mine: my answer ten seconds—my watch will come out—my charger will come round—I rise from the table—embrace my dear old mother—kiss my wife's hand—into the saddle—canter to Paris—roll to Toulon—sail to Egypt. But I shall leave a Madame Raynal and a mother behind me: they will both send me a kind word now and then; and I will write letters to you all from Egypt, and when I come home my wife and I will make acquaintance, and we will all be happy together: and if I am killed out there don't you go and fret your poor little hearts about it: it is

a soldier's lot sooner or later. Besides you will find I have taken care of you: my poor women, Jean Raynal's hand won't let any skulking thief come and turn you out of your quarters, even though Jean Raynal should be dead: I have got to meet Picard at Riviere's on that very business—I am off.'

He was gone as brusquely as he came.

'My mother! my sister!' cried Josephine, 'help me to love this man.'

'You need no help!' cried the baroness, with enthusiasm, 'not love him—we should all be monsters.'

Raynal came to supper looking bright and cheerful.

'No more work to-day. I have nothing to do but talk, fancy that.'

There is no time to relate a tithe of what they said to one another: I select the most remarkable thing.

Josephine de Beaurepaire, who had been silent and thoughtful, said to Raynal in a voice scarce above a whisper—

'Monsieur!'

'Mademoiselle!' rang the trombone.

'Am I not to go to Egypt?'

'No,' was the brusque reply.

Josephine drew back like a sensitive plant. But she returned to the attack.

'Nevertheless monsieur, it seems to me that a wife's duty is to be by her husband's side—to look

after his comfort—to console him when others vex him—to soothe him when he is harassed.

'Her first duty is to obey him.'

'Certainly.'

'Well, when I am your husband I shall bid you stay with your mother and sister while I go to Egypt.'

'As you please monsieur.'

'If I come back from Egypt, and you make the same proposal after we have lived together a while, I shall jump at the offer: but this time stay where you are: look at your sister, a word more and we shall raise the waters. I don't think any the worse of you for making the offer mademoiselle.'

The next day at sharp nine two carriages were at the door. The ladies kept Raynal waiting, and threw out all his serial divisions of time at once. He stamped backwards and forwards, and twisted his moustaches and swore. This was a new torture to him, to be made unpunctual. Jacintha told them he was in a rage, and that made them nervous and flurried, and their fingers strayed wildly among hooks and eyes, and all sorts of fastenings; they were not ready till half-past nine. Conscious they deserved a scolding, they sent Josephine down first. She dawned upon the honest soldier so radiant, so dazzling in her snowy dress, with her coronet of pearls (an heirloom,) and her bridal

veil parted, and the flush of conscious beauty on her cheek, that instead of scolding her, he actually blurted out—

'Well! by St. Denis it was worth waiting half an hour for.'

He recovered a quarter of an hour by making the driver gallop. Occasional shrieks issued from the carriage that held the baroness. The ancient lady anticipated annihilation. She had not come down from a gallopping age.

They rattled into the town, drew up at the mayor's house, were received with great ceremony by that functionary and Picard, and entered the house.

When their carriages rattled into the little town from the north side, the wounded officer had already entered it from the south, and was riding at a foot's pace along the principal street. The motion of his horse now shook him past endurance. He dismounted at an inn a few doors from the mayor's house and determined to do the rest of the short journey on foot. The landlord bustled about him obsequiously. 'You are faint, my officer: you have travelled too far. Let me order you an excellent breakfast.'

'No. I want a carriage; have you one?'

'My officer, I have two.'

'Order one out.'

'But my officer, unluckily they are both engaged for the day and by people of distinction.'

'Then I must rest here half an hour, and then proceed on foot.'

The landlord showed him into a room: it had a large window looking on the street.

'Give me a couple of chairs to lie down on, and open the window: I feel faint.'

'Monsieur wants his breakfast.'

'Well; an omelet and a bottle of red wine: but open the window first.'

He lay near the window, revived by the air and watched the dear little street he had not seen for years—watched with great interest to see what faces he could recognise and which were new.

The wounded hero felt faint, but happy, very very happy.

CHAPTER VI.

THE marriage contract was signed and witnessed.

'Now to the church,' cried the baroness gaily.

'To the church! What for?' asked Raynal.

'Is not the wedding to take place this morning?'

'*Parbleu.*'

Picard put in his word with a knowing look.

'I understand, Madame the Baroness is not aware of the change in the law. People are not married in church now a days.'

'People are not married in church?' and he seemed to her like one that mocks.

'No. The State marries its citizens now; and with reason; since marriage is a civil contract.'

'Marriage a civil contract!' repeated the baroness. 'What, is it then no longer one of the holy Sacraments? What horrible impiety shall we come to next? Unhappy France! Josephine such a contract would never be a marriage in my eyes: and what would become of an union the Church had not blessed?'

'Madame,' said Picard, 'the Church can bless it still; but it is only the mayor here that can *do* it.'

'My daughter! my poor daughter!'

All this time Josephine was blushing scarlet, and looking this way and that, with a sort of instinctive desire to fly and hide, no matter where, for a week or so.

'Haw! haw! haw!' roared Raynal: 'here is a pretty mother. Wants her daughter to be unlawfully married in a church, instead of lawfully in a house. Give me the will!'

Picard handed him a document.

'Look here mother-in-law: I have left Beaurepaire to my lawful wife.'

'Otherwise,' put in Picard, 'in case of death, it would pass to his heir-at-law.'

'And *he* would turn you all out, and that does not suit me. Now there stands the only man who can make mademoiselle my *lawful* wife. So quick march, monsieur the mayor, for time and Bonaparte wait for no man.'

'Stay a minute young people,' said the mayor. 'We should soothe respectable prejudices, not crush them. Madame, I am at least as old as you: and have seen many changes. I perfectly understand your feelings.'

'Ah monsieur! oh!'

'Calm yourself dear madame: the case is not so bad as you think. It is perfectly true that in Republican France the civil magistrate alone can

bind French citizens in lawful wedlock. But this does not annihilate the religious ceremony. You can ask the Church's blessing on my work and be assured you are not the only one who retains that natural prejudice. Out of every ten couples that I marry, four or five go to church afterwards and perform the ancient ceremonies. And they do well. For there before the altar the priest tells them what it is not my business to dilate upon, the grave moral and religious duties they have undertaken along with this civil contract. The State binds; but the Church still blesses, and piously assents to that—'

'From which she has no power to dissent.'

'Monsieur Picard, do you consider it polite to interrupt the chief magistrate of the place while he is explaining the law to the citizen?'

Picard shut up like a knife.

'Ah monsieur!' cried the baroness, 'you are a worthy man. Monsieur have you daughters?'

'Ay madame! that I love well. I married one last year.'

'What, after this fashion?'

'I married her myself, as I will marry yours if you will trust me with her.'

'I will monsieur: you are a father: you are a worthy man: you inspire me with confidence.'

'And after I have made them one, there is nothing to prevent them adjourning to the church.'

'I beg your pardon,' cried Raynal, 'there are two things to prevent it: things that wait for no man: time and Bonaparte. Come, sir, enough chat: to work.'

The mayor assented. He invited Josephine to stand before him. She trembled and wept a little: Laure clung to her and wept, and the good mayor married the parties off hand.

'Is that all?' asked the baroness; 'it is terribly soon done.'

'It is done effectively madam,' said the mayor with a smile. 'Permit me to tell you that his Holiness the Pope cannot undo my work.'

Picard grinned slily, and whispered something into Raynal's ear.

'Oh! indeed!' said Raynal aloud and carelessly. 'Come Madame Raynal to breakfast: follow us.'

They paired and followed the bride and bridegroom into the breakfast room.

The light words Picard whispered were just five in number.

Those five words contained seven syllables. Now if the mayor had not snubbed Picard just before, he would have uttered those jocose but true words aloud. There was no particular reason why he should not. And if he had—The threads of the web of life, how subtle they are! The finest cotton of Manchester, the finer meshes of the spider seem three-inch cables by comparison with those

moral gossamers which vulgar eyes cannot see at all, the 'somethings, nothings,' on which great fates have hung.

It was a cheerful breakfast, thanks to Raynal, who was in high spirits and would not allow a word of regret from any one. Madame Raynal sat by his side, looking up at him every now and then with innocent admiration. A merry wedding breakfast!

Oh if we could see through the walls of houses!

Five doors off sat a wounded soldier alone, recruiting the small remnant of his sore tried strength, that he might struggle on to Beaurepaire, and lose in one moment years of separation, pain, prison, anguish, martyrdom, in one great gush of joy without compare.

CHAPTER VII.

THE wedding breakfast was ended. The time was drawing near to part. There was a silence. It was broken by Madame Raynal.

'Monsieur,' said she a little timidly, 'have you reflected?'

'On what?'

'About taking me to Egypt.'

'No; I have not given it a thought since I said "no."'

'Yet permit me to say that it is my duty to be by your side, my husband. And she coloured at this word—it was the first time she had ever used it.

'Not when I excuse you.'

'I would not be an encumbrance to you monsieur: I should not be useless. I could add more to his comfort than he gives me credit for messieurs.'

Warm assent of the mayor and notary.

'I give you credit for being an angel, my wife.'

He looked up. Laure was trembling, her fork shaking in her poor little hand.

She cast a piteous glance at him.

'But all the generosity must not be on your side. You shall go with me next time; that is settled. Let us speak of it no more.'

'Monsieur I submit. At least give me something to do for you while you are away. Ah! tell me what I can do for my absent friend to show my gratitude—my regard—my esteem.'

'Well madame—let me think. Well, I saw a plain grey dress at Beaurepaire.'

'Yes monsieur. My grey silk, Laure.'

'I like that dress.'

'Monsieur, the moment I reach home after losing you I shall put it on, and it shall be my constant wear. I see—you are right—grey becomes a wife whose husband is not dead, but is absent, and alas! in hourly danger.'

'Now look at that!' cried Raynal to the company. 'That is her all over; she can see six meanings where another would see but one. I never thought of that I swear. I like modest colours, that is all. My mother used to be all for modest wives wearing modest colours.'

'Count on me monsieur. Is there nothing more difficult you will be so good as give me to do?'

'No; there is only one order more, and that will be easier still to such a woman as you. I commit to your care mademoiselle—madame I mean—the name of Raynal. It is not so high a name as

yours, but it is as honest. I am proud of it—I am jealous of it. I shall guard it for you in Egypt; you guard it in France for me.'

'With my life!' cried Josephine, lifting her eyes and her hand to heaven.

Raynal rang the bell, and ordered his charger round.

The baroness began to cry.

'The young people may hope to see you again,' said she; 'but there are two chances against your poor old mother.'

'Courage mother!' cried the stout soldier. 'No, no; you won't play me such a trick—once is enough for that game.'

'My brother!' cried Laure, 'do not go without kissing your little sister, who loves you and thanks you.'

He kissed her.

'Brave, generous man!' she cried with her arms round his neck; 'God protect you, and send you back safe to us!'

'Amen!' cried all present by one impulse—even the cold notary.

Raynal's moustache quivered.

He kissed Josephine hastily on the brow; the baroness on both cheeks, shook the men's hands warmly but hastily, and strode out without looking behind him.

They followed him to the door of the house. He

was tightening his horse's girths. He flung himself with all the resolution of his steel nature into the saddle, and, with one grand wave of his cocked hat to the tearful group, he spurred away for Egypt.

CHAPTER VIII.

The baroness made the doctor go shopping.

'I must buy Laure a grey silk.'

In doing this she saw many other tempting things. I say no more.

Meantime the young ladies went up to Beaurepaire in the other carriage, for Josephine wished to avoid the gaze of the town, and get home, and be quiet.

The driver went very fast. He had drunk the bride's health at the mayor's, item the bridegroom's, the bridesmaid's, the mayor's, &c., &c., and 'a spur in the head is worth two in the heel,' says the proverb. The sisters leaned back on the soft cushions and enjoyed the smooth and rapid motion once so familiar to them, so rare of late.

Then Laure took her sister gently to task for having offered to go to Egypt.

'You forgot me, cruel one.'

'No, love, did you not see I dared not look towards you? I love you better than all the world: but this was my duty. I was his wife: I had no

longer a feeble inclination and a feeble disinclination to decide between—but right on one side, wrong on the other.'

'Oh! I know where your ladyship's strength lies: my force is—in—my inclinations.'

'Yes! Laure,' continued Josephine thoughtfully, 'duty is a great comfort—it is tangible—it is something to lay hold of for life or death: a strong tower for the weak but well disposed.'

'How fast we glide Josephine—it is so nice. I am not above owning I love a carriage; now lean back with me, and take my hand, and as we glide shut your eyes and think—whisper me all your feelings, all—all.'

'Laure,' said Josephine, half closing her eyes, 'I feel a great calm, a heavenly calm.'

'I thought you would,' murmured Laure.

'My fate is decided. No more suspense. My duties are clear. I have a husband I am proud of. There is no perfidy with him, no deceit—no disingenuousness, no shade. He is a human sun. Nothing unmanly either. No feebleness: one can lean on him. He will make me a better truer woman, and I him a happier man. Yes, is it not nice to think that great and strong as he is I can teach him a happiness he knows not as yet?' And she smiled with the sense of her delicate power.

'Yes go on dear,' purred Laure, 'I seem to see your pretty little thoughts rising out of your heart like a bubbling fountain: go on.'

'Yes, love, and then, gratitude—Laure I have heard it said, or read it somewhere, that gratitude is a burden: I don't understand that sentiment—why to me gratitude is a delight, gratitude is a passion. It is the warmest of all the tender feelings I have for dear Monsieur Raynal. I feel it glow here—in my bosom.'

'One word, dear: do you think you shall love him?'

'Indeed, I do.'

'When?'

'Oh! long before he comes back.'

'*Before?*'

Josephine, her eyes still half-closed, went murmuring on. 'His virtues will always be present to me. His little faults of manner will not be in sight. Good Raynal! The image of those great qualities I revere so, perhaps because I fail in them myself, will be before my mind: and ere he comes home I shall love him: don't you think so? tell me.'

'I am sure of it. I love him already. I am a selfish girl. My mother found me out. I am so much obliged to her. But I am not a wicked girl: and if I have been unkind to him I will make it up to him. Go on, dear, tell me your whole heart.'

'Yes. One reason why I wished to go home at once was—no—guess.'

'To put on your grey silk. Oh, I know you.'

'Yes, Laure it was: dear good Raynal. Yes, I

feel prouder of his honest name than of our noble one. And I am so calm, my sister—so tranquil—so pleased, that my mother's mind is at rest—so convinced all is for the best—so contented with my own lot—so hap—py.'

A gentle tear stole from beneath her long lashes. Laure looked at her wistfully: then laid her cheek to hers. They leaned back hand in hand placid and silent.

The carriage glided fast. Beaurepaire was almost in sight.

Suddenly Josephine's hand tightened on Laure's and she sat up in the carriage like a person awakened.

'What is it?' asked Laure. 'Are we at home? No.'

Josephine turned quickly round. 'No window at the back,' said she.

Laure instantly put her head out at the side window.

'What is it? I see nothing. What was it?'

'Some one in uniform.'

'Oh, is that all.'

'I saw an epaulette.'

'Oh! an officer! I saw nobody. To be sure the road took a turn. Ah! you thought it was a message from Raynal.'

'Oh! no! on foot—walking very slowly. Coming this way, too. Coming this way! Coming this way!'

'Ah, bah! it is no such rarity—there are plenty of soldiers on the road.'

'Not officers—on foot.'

After a pause Josephine added—

'He seemed to drag himself along.'

'Oh! did he,' cried Laure carelessly. 'Here we are; we are just at home.'

'I am glad of it,' said Josephine, 'very glad.'

'Will you go up stairs and put on your gown?'

'Presently. Let us walk in the Pleasance a minute first for the air.'

They walked in the Pleasance.

'How you tear along, Josephine! Stop, let me look at you! What is the matter?'

'Nothing! nothing!'

'There's a fretful tone: and how excited you are, why you burn all over. Well it's no wonder: I thought you were calmer than natural after such an event.'

'Who could he be Laure?'

'Who?'

'That officer. I only saw his back: but did not you see him Laure?'

'No.'

'Are you sure you did not see him at all?'

'Why of course not: I don't believe there was one; I am wrong; for there comes his cocked hat: I can see it bob every now and then above the palings.'

Josephine turned very slowly round and looked: she said nothing.

'Come dear,' said Laure, 'let us go in: the only cocked hat we care for is on the way to Paris!'

'Yes Laure: let us go in. No! I can't go in—I feel faint: I want air: I shall stay out a little longer! Look Laure what a shame! They put all manner of rubbish into this dear old tree: I will have it all turned out!' and she looked with feigned interest into the tree: but her eyes seemed turned inward.

Laure gave a cry of surprise.

'Josephine!'

'What? What?'

'He is waving his hat to me! What on earth does that mean?'

'He takes you for me!' said Josephine.

'Who is it?'

'*It is he!* I knew his figure at a glance!' and she blushed and trembled with joy; she darted into the tree and tried to look through the apertures: but she could not see at that angle: turning round she found Laure at her back pale and stern.

'Ah! Laure I FORGOT!!'

'Are you mad Josephine? into the house this moment—if it is he I will receive and dismiss him. Fly! quick! for Heaven's sake.'

'I can't! I must hear! oh, don't fear! he shall never see me! I must know why he comes here to-

day and not for all these years: some mystery is here: something terrible is going to happen! something terrible!—terrible!—terrible!—go outside:—let him see you!—oh!—'

Laure no sooner got round the tree again, than the cocked hat stopped—a pale face with eyes whose eager fire shone all that way into the tree, rose up and looked over the palings, and never moved.

Josephine's eyes were fixed on it.

'I feel something terrible coming! something terrible! terrible!'

'Malediction on him, heartless, selfish traitor!' cried Laure. 'He has deserted you these three years: they have told him you are married: so he hunts you directly, to destroy your peace. Ah! I am glad you are come wretch, to hear that a better man than you has got her: Josephine you listen: I will tell him that you have a husband whom you love as you never loved him: and that if he dares to show his face here you will laugh at him, and your husband will kill him or kick him. Oh! I'll insult the *lâche:* I'll insult him as you never saw a man insulted yet.'

'No you will not!' said Josephine doggedly: 'for I should hate you.'

'Ah! Josephine!—cruel Josephine. The accursed wretch! for him you have stabbed me.'

'And you me! Unmask him, and I will bless you on my knees! But pray do not insult him.

We are parted for ever. Be wise now girl, be shrewd,' hissed Josephine, in a tone of which one would not have thought her capable. 'Find out who is the woman who has seduced him from me, and has brought two wretches to this. I tell you it is some bad woman's doing. He loved me once.'

'Not so loud!—one word!—you are a wife! You will not let him see you—swear!'

'Oh! never! never! Death sooner! When you have heard all, then tell him I am gone—tell him I went to Egypt this day with him I— Ah! would to God I had!'

'Sh! sh!'

'Sh!'

Camille was at the little gate.

Laure stood still, and nerved herself in silence. Josephine panted in her hiding-place.

Laure's only thought now was to expose the traitor to her sister, and restore her to that sweet peace. She would not see Camille till he was near her. He came eagerly towards her, his pale face flushing with great joy, and his eyes like diamonds.

'Josephine! It is not Josephine! Why this must be Laure, little Laure grown up to a fine lady, a beautiful lady—my darling!!'

'What do you come here for monsieur?' asked Laure in a tone of icy indifference.

'What do I come here for? is that the way to speak to me? but I am too happy to mind. Dear Beaurepaire! do I see you once again. Ah Laure,

I am not given to despair, but there have been moments look you—Bah! it is past. I am here.'

'And madame?'

'What madame?'

'Madame Dujardin that is or was to be?'

'This is the first I have ever heard of her,' said Camille gaily.

'This is odd, for we have heard all about it.'

'Are you jesting?'

'No!'

'If I understand you right, you imply that I have broken faith with Josephine?'

'Certainly!'

'You lie! Mademoiselle Laure de Beaurepaire.'

'Insolent!'

'No! it is you who have insulted your sister as well as me. She was not made to be deserted for meaner women. Come mademoiselle, insult me, and me alone, and you shall find me more patient. Oh who would have thought Beaurepaire would receive me thus?'

'It is your own fault.'

'Are you sure?'

'Positive.'

'Not my misfortune?'

'You never sent her a line for all these years.'

'Alas no! how could I?'

'Nonsense: well monsieur the information you did not supply others did.'

'All the better? who? how?'

'We know from excellent authority that you deserted to the enemy.'

'I! Camille Dujardin—deserted! Josephine, why are you not here? I know how to answer a man who insults me, but what can I say to a woman? Oh God, do you hear what they say to me after all I have gone through?'

'Ah monsieur you act well!' said Laure acting herself, for her heart began to quake: 'let us close this painful scene; you were seen in a Spanish village drinking between two guerillas?'

'Well!'

'An honest French soldier fired at you.'

'He did.'

'You confess it?' cried Laure joyfully.

'The bullet passed through my hand—here is the mark: look.'

'Ah! ah! He and his comrades told us all.'

'All?'

'All!'

'Did he tell you that under the table I was chained tight down to the chair I sat in? Did he tell you that my hand was fastened to a drinking-horn, and my elbow to the table, and two fellows sitting opposite me with pistols quietly covering me, ready to draw the trigger if I should utter a cry. Did he tell you that I would have uttered that cry and died at that table but for one thing—I had promised her to live.'

'What an improbable story!' said Laure, but her voice trembled. 'Besides, what became of you this three years? Not a word—not a line.'

'Mademoiselle,' began Camille very coldly, 'if you are really my Josephine's sister, you will reproach yourself for this so bitterly that I need not reproach you. If she I love were to share these unworthy suspicions it would kill me on the spot. I am then on my defence. I feel myself blush—Dieu!—but it is for you I blush, not for myself. This is what became of me. I went out alone to explore. I fell into an ambuscade. I was surrounded. I shot one of them, and pinked another, but my arm being broken by a bullet, and my horse killed under me, the rascals got me. I was in fact insensible, probably from loss of blood —a cut in the thigh. These fellows throw their knives with great force and skill. They took me about with them, tried to make a decoy of me as I have told you, and ended by throwing me into a dungeon—a damp dark dungeon. They loaded me with chains too, though the walls were ten feet thick, and the door iron, and bolted and double bolted outside. And there for months and years, in spite of wounds, hunger, thirst, and all the tortures those cowards made me suffer, I lived, because, Laure, I had promised some one at that gate there (and he turned suddenly and pointed to it) that I would come back alive. At last one night my gaoler came to my cell drunk. I seized

him by the throat and throttled him : I did not kill him, but I griped him till he was insensible : his keys unlocked my fetters, and locked them again upon his limbs, and locked him in the cell, and I got safely outside. But there a sentinel saw me and fired at me. He missed me but ran after me, and caught me—for I was stiff, confined so long—he gave me a thrust of his bayonet, I flung my heavy keys fiercely in his face—he staggered —I wrested his piece from him, and disabled him.'

'Ah!'

'I crossed the frontier in the night, and got to Bayonne; and thence, day and night, to Paris. There I met a reward for all my anguish. A greater is behind! a greater is behind! They gave me the epaulettes of a colonel. See! here they are. France does not give these to traitors, young lady. And from the moment I left dark Spain and entered once more la belle France, every man and woman on the road was so kind, so sympathizing; some cried after me, "God speed you." They felt for the poor worn soldier, coming back to his love. All but you, Laure. You told me I was a traitor.'

'Forgive me. I—I—' and she thought, 'Oh Heaven enlighten me—what shall I say—what shall I do?'

'Oh, if you repent,' cried he, 'that is different, I forgive you. There is my hand. You are not a soldier, and did not know what you were talking

about. I am very sorry I spoke so harshly to you. But you understand. How you look! How you pant! Poor child! I forgive you. There, I will show you how I forgive you. These epaulettes, dear—I have never put them on! I said, no! Josephine shall put them on for me. I will take honour as well as happiness from her dear hand. But you are her sister, and what are epaulettes compared with what she will give me? You shall put them on dear. Come; then you will be sure I bear no malice.'

Laure, faint at heart, consented in silence, and fastened on the epaulettes. 'Yes, Camille,' she said, 'think of glory now: nothing but glory.'

'No one thinks of it more. But to-day how can I think of it, how can I give her a rival? To-day, I am all love. Laure, no man ever loved a human creature as I love Josephine! Your mother is well, dear? All are well at Beaurepaire? Oh! where is she all this time? in the house?' He was moving quickly towards the house: but Laure in turn put out her hand to stop him. He recoiled a little and winced.

'What is the matter?' cried she.

'Nothing dear girl; you put your hand on my wound—that is all.'

'Oh! you are wounded?'

'Yes; I got a bayonet thrust from one of the sentinels when I escaped from prison. It is a little inflamed. I will tell you; but you must promise and not tell Josephine; why vex that angel? This

wound has worried me a little all the way. They wanted me to stop and lay up at Bayonne—how could I? and again at Paris—how could I? They said, "You will die." "Not before I get to Beaurepaire," said I. I could bear the motion of a horse no longer. I asked for a carriage. Would you believe it?—both his carriages were out at a wedding. I could not wait till they came back. I have waited an eternity. I came on foot. I dragged myself along—the body was weak, but the heart was strong. A little way from here my wound seemed inclined to open; I pressed it together tight with my hand; you see I could not afford to lose any more blood; and so struggled on. "Die?" said I, "not before Beaurepaire." And oh! Laure, now I could be content to die—at her feet—for I am happy!—oh, I am happy! What I have gone through! But I kept my word—and this is Beaurepaire! Hurrah!'—and his pale cheek flushed feebly, and his eye gleamed, and he waved his hat feebly over his head—'hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!'

'Oh, don't!—don't!—dont!'

'How can I help?—I am wild with joy—hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!'

'No! no! no! no! no!'

'What is the matter?'

'Oh! must I stab you worse than all your enemies have stabbed you?'

'What is the matter? You turn me cold—very

cold. What is the matter? Josephine does not come. My heart!'

'Camille—my poor Camille! there is but one thing for you to do. Leave Beaurepaire on the instant—fly from it—it is no place for you.'

'She is dead.'

'No.'

'She is dead.—She does not come to me—she is dead! You are all in white—they mourn in white for angels like her, that go to Heaven—virgins. Oh! I was blind. You might have told me at once. You see I can bear it. What does it matter to one who loves as I love? It is only to give her one more proof I lived only for her. I would have died a hundred times but for my promise to her. Yes! I am coming love! I am coming!'

He fell on his knees and smiled, and whispered—

'I am coming Josephine—I am coming!'

A sob and a moan as of a creature dying in anguish answered him.

Laure screamed in terror when she heard it.

Camille rose wildly to his feet.

'I hear her! She is behind the tree.'

'No! no!'

A rustle and a rush was heard in the tree.

Camille darted furiously round the tree. Laure followed the next moment.

Josephine was in his arms.

Josephine wrestled long and terribly with nature

in that old oak tree. But who can so struggle for ever? Anguish, remorse, horror, despair, and love wrenched her heart to and fro, like giants fighting for a prey: and oh! mysterious human heart! gleams of a mad fitful joy shot through her, coming quick as lightning, going as quickly, and leaving the despair darker. And then the fierce struggle of the soul to make itself heard. More than once she had to close her mouth with her hand: more than once she seized her throat not to cry out. But as the struggle endured, she got weaker and weaker, and nature mightier and mightier. And when the wounded hero fell on his knees so close to her—when he who had resisted death so bravely for her, prepared to give up life calmly for her, her bosom rose beyond all control: it seemed to fill to choking, then to split wide open and give the struggling soul passage in one gasping sob and heart-stricken cry.

Could she have pent this in, she must have died.

It betrayed her. She felt it had: then came the woman's instinct—flight: the coward's impulse—flight: the chaste wife's instinct—flight. She rushed from her hiding place and made wildly for the house.

But Camille was darting round the tree. She ran right upon him. He caught her in his arms. He held her irresistibly. 'I have got her—I have got her,' he shouted in wild triumph. 'No! I will not let you go. None but God shall ever

take you from me, and he has spared you to me. You are not dead: you have kept faith as I have! You have lived. See! look at me. I am alive—I am well—I am happy. I told Laure I suffered. I lied. If I had suffered I should remember it. It is all gone at sight of you, my love! my love! Oh, my Josephine! my love!'

His arm was firm round her waist. His glowing eyes poured love upon her. She felt his beating heart.

All that passed in her—what mortal can say? She seemed two women: that part of her which could not get away from his strong arm lost all strength to resist—it yielded and thrilled under his embrace, her bosom heaving madly: all that was free writhed away from him: her face was averted with a glare of terror, and both her hands put up between his eyes and it.

'You turn away your head. Laure, she turns away. Speak for me. Scold her: for I don't know how to scold her. No answer from either: oh what has turned your hearts against me so?'

'Camille,' cried Laure—the tears streaming down her cheeks—'my poor Camille! leave Beaurepaire. Oh, leave it at once.'

He turned towards her with a look of inquiry.

At that Josephine, like some feeble but nimble wild creature on whom a grasp has relaxed, writhed away from him and fled. 'Farewell! Farewell!' she cried.

It seemed despair itself who spoke.

She had not taken six steps when Jacintha met her right in front. 'Madame Raynal,' she cried, curtseying, 'the baroness is in the summer house and wants to speak to you. I was the first to call her madame:' and Jacintha, little dreaming of all she had done, went off in triumph, after another curtsey.

This blow turned those three to stone.

Josephine had no longer the power or the wish to fly. 'Better so,' she thought, and she stood cowering.

Then the great passions that had spoken so loud were struck dumb, and a deep silence fell upon the place. Madame Raynal's quivering eye turned slowly and askant towards Camille, but stopped in terror ere it could see him.

Silence—dead silence!

The ladies knew by this fearful stillness that the truth was creeping on Camille.

Madame Raynal cowered more and more.

Camille spoke one word in a low whisper—

'Madame?'

Dead silence.

'White? both in white?'

'Camille, it was our doing. We drove her to it. Oh, sir, look how afraid of you she is. Do not kill her: do not reproach her, if you are a man.'

He waved her out of his way as if she had been some idle feather, and he walked up to Josephine.

'It is for you to speak, my betrothed: are you married?

The poor creature, true to her nature, was thinking more of him than herself. Even in her despair it flashed across her 'If he knew all, he too would be wretched for life. If I let him scorn me he may be happy one day.' She cowered the picture of sorrow and tongue-tied guilt.

'Are you a wife?'

'Yes.'

He staggered.

'This is how I came to be suspected: she I loved was false?'

'Yes, Camille.'

'No! no!' cried Laure: 'she alone never suspected you: and we have brought her to this—we alone.'

'Be silent Laure—oh! be silent!!!' gasped Josephine.

'I lived for you: I would have died for you: you could not even wait for me.'

A low moan: but not a word of excuse.

'What can I do for you now?'

'Forget me, Camille.'

'Forget you? oh never! never! there is but one thing I can do to show you how I loved you—forgive you—and begone—whither shall I go? whither shall I go now?'

'Oh, Camille, your words stab her: she—'

'Be silent! let none speak but I—none here but

I has the right to speak. Poor weak angel that loved yet could not wait: I forgive you! be happy!—if you can—I bid you be hap-py!'

The quiet despairing tones died away, and with them life seemed to end to her, and hope to go out. He turned his back quickly on her. 'To the army!' he cried hoarsely. He drew himself haughtily up in marching attitude. He took three strides erect and fiery and bold. At the fourth the great heart snapped, and the worn body it had held up so long rolled like a dead log upon the ground with a tremendous fall.

CHAPTER IX.

The baroness and St. Aubin were walking gently on the South Terrace, when suddenly they heard shrieks of terror in the Pleasance. They came with quaking hearts as fast as their old limbs would carry them. They found Laure and Josephine crouched over the body of a man—an officer.

Laure was just tearing open his collar and jacket. Dard and Jacintha had run from the kitchen at the screams. Camille lay on his back, white and motionless.

The doctor now came up. 'Who! what is this?' He shook his head. 'This is a bad case. Stand away ladies. Let me feel his pulse.'

Whilst the old man was going stiffly down on one knee, Jacintha uttered a cry of terror. 'See! see! his shirt! that red streak! Ah! ah! it is getting bigger and bigger:' and she turned faint in a moment, and would have fallen but for Dard.

The doctor looked. 'All the better,' said he firmly. 'I thought he was dead! His blood flows: then I will save him! Don't clutch me so,

Josephine—don't cling to me like that. Now is the time to show your breed: not turn sick at the sight of a little blood like that foolish creature; but help me save the poor man.'

'Take him indoors!' cried the baroness.

'Into our house mamma?' gasped Laure.

'The lightning would strike it if we did not! What! a wounded soldier who has fought for France! leave him to lie and die outside my door—never: what would my son say? He is a soldier.'

Laure cast a hasty look at Josephine: Josephine's eyes were bent on the ground and her hands clenched.

'Now Jacintha—you be off!' said the doctor. 'I can't have cowards about him to make the others as bad—go and stew down a piece of good beef for him my girl.'

'That I will: poor thing.'

The baroness recognised Camille.

'Why I know him: it is an old acquaintance, young Dujardin—you remember, Josephine; I used to suspect him of a fancy for you, poor fellow! Why, he must have come here to see us—poor soul.'

'No matter who it is—it is a man. Now girls have you courage, have you humanity? Then come one on each side of him and take hands beneath his back, while I lift his head and Dard his legs.'

'And handle him gently monsieur whatever you do,' said Dard. 'I know what it is. I have been wounded.'

These four carried the lifeless burden very slowly and gently across the Pleasance to the house: then with more difficulty and caution up the stairs.

All the while the sisters' hands griped one another tight beneath the lifeless burden, and spoke to one another. And Josephine's arm upheld tenderly but not weakly the hero she had struck down. She avoided Laure's eye, her mother's eye, and even the doctor's eye: one gasping sob escaped her as she walked with head half averted and vacant, terror-stricken eyes, and her victim on her sustaining arm.

They laid him in the tapestried chamber.

'I must have this room for him,' said the doctor. 'It is airy. Now, away with you girls: Dard, help me undress him.'

Laure took Josephine's hand: 'Sit on the stairs,' said she, 'then when Dard comes out we shall hear.'

Josephine obeyed passively. She sat in gloomy silence, her eyes on the ground, like one waiting for her deathblow.

Laure, sick at heart, sat silent too. At last she said faintly, 'Have we done well?'

'I don't know,' said Josephine, doggedly. Her eyes never left the ground.

'We could not let him die for want of care.'

'He will not thank us, my sister. Better to die than live.'

At this instant Dard came running down. 'Good news! mesdemoiselles! good news! the wound runs all along: it is not deep, like mine was. He has opened his eyes and shut them again. The dear good doctor stopped the blood in a twinkle. The doctor says he'll be bound to save him. I must run and tell Jacintha. She is taking on in the kitchen.'

Josephine, who had risen eagerly from her despairing posture, clasped her hands together: then lifted up her voice and wept. 'He will live! he will live!'

When she had wept a long while she said to Laure—'Come, my sister, help your poor Josephine.'

'Yes, love, what?'

'My duty,' faltered Josephine. 'My duty that an hour ago seemed so sweet,' and she fell to weeping patiently again.

They went to Josephine's room. She crept slowly to a wardrobe, and took out a grey silk dress.

'Oh never mind for to-day,' cried Laure. 'Alas! alas!'

'Help me, my sister. It is for myself as well.'

'To remind me every moment I am Madame Raynal.'

They put the grey gown on her, both weeping patiently. It will be known at the last day, all

that honest women have suffered weeping silently in this noisy world.

Camille soon recovered his senses and a portion of his strength: then the irritation of his wound brought on fever. This in turn retired before the doctor's remedies and a sound constitution: but it left behind it a great weakness and general prostration. And in this state the fate of the body depends greatly on the mind.

The baroness and the doctor went constantly to see him, and soothe him: he smiled and often thanked them, but his eager eyes watched the door for one who came not.

When he got well enough to leave his bed the largest couch was sent up to him from the saloon: a kind hand lined the baron's silk dressing-gown for him warm and soft and nice: and he would sit or lie on his couch, or take two turns in the room leaning upon Laure's shoulder, and glad of the support: and oh, he looked so piteously in her eyes when she came, and when she went: Laure lowered her eyes before them—she could do nothing—she could say nothing.

She saw that with his strength Camille had lost a portion of his pride: that he pined for a sight of her he no longer respected: pined for her—as the thirsty pine for water in Zahara.

At last one day he spoke.

'How kind you are to me Laure! how kind you all are—but one.'

He waited in hopes she would say something, but she held her tongue.

'At least tell me why it is? Is she ashamed? Is she afraid?'

'Neither.'

'She hates me: it is then true that we hate those whom we have wounded. Cruel! cruel Josephine. Oh heart of marble against which my heart has wrecked itself for ever!'

'Alas! she is not cruel—but she is Madame Raynal.'

'Ah!—I forgot! But have I no claim on her? Nearly four years she has been my betrothed. What have I done? Was I ever false to her? I could forgive her for what she has done to me, but she cannot forgive me. Does she mean never to see me again?'

'What good could come of it?'

'Very well,' said Camille, with a malicious smile. 'I am in her way. I see what she wants—she shall have it.'

Laure carried these words to Josephine. They went through her like a sword.

Laure pitied her.

'Let us go to him. Anything is better than this.'

'Laure, I dare not.'

The next day early, Josephine took Laure to a door outside the house, a door that had long been disused. Nettles grew before it. She pro-

duced a key and with great difficulty opened this door.

'Ah it is a good many years since I have been in there,' said Laure. 'Why Josephine it leads to the tapestry chamber. You remember where we used to peep through into the room. Ah how happy we were then.'

'Yes. Watch him, as a mother does her child. Oh! if anything happens to him while he is under my care—'

'Be calm, love, do not fear, I will watch him. I share your misgivings, your fears; I share all with you.'

'My sister! my Laure! my guardian angel! If I had not you, who knows what a miserable woman I am, I should go raving mad.'

When Josephine had placed Camille under this strange surveillance, she felt a little, a very little easier, she hardly knew why; for in truth it was a vague protection against a danger equally mysterious. So great was Josephine's forethought, so unflinching her determination, that she never once could be prevailed on to mount those stairs, and peep at Camille herself. 'I must starve my heart, not feed it.' And she grew paler and more hollow-eyed day by day.

Yet this was the same woman who showed such feebleness and irresolution when Raynal pressed her to marry him.

But then dwarfs feebly drew her this way and

that. Now giants fought for her. Between a feeble inclination and a feeble disinclination her dead heart drifted to and fro. Now honour, duty, gratitude, which with her was a passion, dragged her one way—love, pity, and remorse another.

Neither of these giants would relax his grasp, and nothing yielded except her vital powers. Yes; her temper—the loveliest temper Heaven ever gave a human creature was soured at times.

There lay the man she loved pining for her: cursing her for her cruelty—praying Heaven to forgive him and to bless her, and curse him instead—sighing, at intervals, all the day long so loud, so deep, so piteously, as if his heart broke with each sigh; and sometimes, for he little knew, poor soul, that any human eye was upon him, casting aside his manhood in his despair, and flinging himself on the very floor, and muffling his head, and sobbing—he a hero.

And here was she pining in secret for him, who pined for her? 'I am not a woman at all,' cried she, who was all woman. 'I am crueller to him than a tiger or any savage creature is to the victim she tears. I must not tempt you. To love me now is a sin. I must cure you of your love for me, and then die: for what shall I have to live for? He weeps, he sighs, he cries for Josephine.'

This enforced cruelty was more contrary to this woman's nature as well as to her heart, than black is to white, or heat to cold: and nature rebelled

with all her forces. As when a rock tries to stem a current, the water fights its way on more sides than one, so insulted Nature dealt with Josephine. Not only did her body pine, but her nerves were exasperated. Sudden twitches came over her, that almost made her scream. Her permanent state was utter despondency: but across it came fitful flashes of irritation; and then she was scarce mistress of herself.

Wherefore you who find some holy woman cross and bitter, stop a moment before you sum her up vixen and her religion nought: inquire the history of her heart: perhaps beneath the smooth cold surface of duties well discharged, her life has been, or even is, a battle against some self-indulgence the insignificant saint's very blood cries out for: and so the poor thing is cross, not because she is bad: but because she is better than the rest of us—yet human.

As for Josephine's little bursts of fretfulness they were always followed by disproportionate penitence and pathetic efforts to be so very kind to those whom she had scratched, and then felt for as if she had ploughed great bleeding furrows in them.

Now though she was more on her guard with the baroness than with Laure, or the doctor, or Jacintha, her state could not altogether escape the vigilance of a mother's eye.

But the baroness had not the clue we have.

That makes all the difference: how small an understanding put by accident or instruction on the right track shall run the game down: how great a sagacity shall wander if it gets on a false scent.*

'Doctor you are so taken up with your patient you neglect the rest of us. Do look at Josephine! She is ill!'

'No madame, or she would have told me.'

'Well then she is going to be ill. She is so pale, and so fretful, so peevish, which is not in her nature. Would you believe it doctor, she snaps?'

'Our Josephine snap? This is new.'

'And snarls.'

'Then look for the end of the world.'

'The other day I heard her snap Laure: and this morning she half snarled at me, just because I pressed her to go and console our patient. Hush! here she is. My child I am accusing you to monsieur here. I am telling him you neglect his patient.'

'I, mamma!'

'You never go near him.'

'I will visit him one of these days,' said Josephine coldly.

'One of these days my daughter. You used not to be so hard hearted. A soldier, an old

* *Vide* all authentic records of man's reasonings and inventions: for climax plunge from Newton reasoning astronomy down to Newton reasoning alchymy.

comrade of your husband's, wounded and sick, and you alone never go to him, to console him with a word of sympathy or encouragement.'

Josephine looked at her mother with a sort of incredulous stare.

'I do not recognize you. You who are so kind-hearted and pitiful, except to wounded soldiers.'

Josephine smiled bitterly. Then after a struggle she replied with a tone and manner so spiteful and icy that it would have deceived even us who know her had we heard it.

'He has plenty of nurses without me.' She added almost violently, 'my husband, if he were wounded, would not have so many, perhaps not have one.'

With this she rose and went out, leaving them aghast. She sat down in the passage on a window seat, and laughed hysterically.

Laure heard her and ran to her. Josephine told her what her mother had said to her. Laure soothed her.

'Never mind. You have your sister who understands you: don't come in till they have got some other topic.'

Laure out of curiosity went in, and found a discussion going on. The doctor was fathoming Josephine, for the benefit of his companion.

'It is a female jealousy: and of a mighty innocent kind. We are so occupied with this poor fellow, she thinks her soldier is forgotten.'

'Surely, doctor, our Josephine would not be so unreasonable, so unjust.'

'She belongs to a sex, be it said without offending you madam, among whose numberless virtues justice does not fill a prominent place.'

The baroness shook her head.

'That is not it. It is a piece of prudery. This young gentleman was a sort of admirer of hers, though she did not admire him much, as far as I remember. But it was four years ago; and she is married to a man she loves, or is going to love.'

'Well but, mamma, a trifling excess of delicacy is surely excusable.'

'It is not delicacy: it is prudery. And when people are sick and suffering, an honest woman should take up her charity and lay down her prudery, or her coquetry: two things that I suspect are the same thing in different shapes.'

Here Jacintha came in.

'Mademoiselle, here is the colonel's broth; Madame Raynal has flavoured it for him, and you are to take it up to him, and keep him company while he eats it.'

'Come,' cried the baroness, 'my lecture has not been lost.'

Laure followed Jacintha up stairs.

Laure was heart and head on Raynal's side.

She had deceived him about Josephine's attachment, and felt all the more desirous to guard him against any ill consequences of it. Then he had

been so generous to her: he had left her her sister, who would have gone to Egypt, and escaped this misery, but for her.

But on the other hand, if I may use a great master's words,

——— Gentle pity
Tugged at her heartstrings with complaining cries.

This watching of Camille made her wretched. When she was with him his pride bore him up: but when he was alone as he thought, his anguish and despair were terrible, and broke out in so many ways that often Laure shrank in terror from her peephole.

She dared not tell Josephine the half of what she saw: what she did tell her agitated her so terribly: and often Laure had it on the tip of her tongue to say—'Do pray go and see if you can say nothing that will do him good:' but she fought the impulse down. This battle of feeling, though less severe than her sister's, was constant: it destroyed her gaiety. She, whose merry laugh used to ring like chimes through the house, never laughed now, seldom smiled, and often sighed. The elders felt a deep gloom settle down upon the house.

One evening the baroness, Josephine, and St. Aubin sat in the saloon, in dead silence.

Doctor St. Aubin had been the last to succumb to the deep depression, but for a day or two he had been as grave and as sad as the rest.

He now broke silence.

'I am glad Laure is out of the room,' said he thoughtfully, 'I wish to consult you two.'

'We listen, my friend,' said the baroness with interest.

'It is humiliating, after all my experience, to be obliged to consult unprofessional persons. Forty years ago I should have been *too wise* to do so. But since then I have often seen science baffled and untrained intelligences throw light upon hard questions: and your sex in particular has luminous instincts and reads things by flashes that we men miss with a microscope. Our dear Madame Raynal read that notary, and to this day I believe she could not tell us how.'

'I know very well how I read him, dear friend.'

'How?'

'Oh! I can't *tell* how.'

'There you see. Well then you must help me in this case. And this time I promise to treat your art with more respect.'

'And who is it she is to read now?' asked the baroness.

Josephine said nothing: but trembled, and was secretly but keenly on her guard.

'Who should it be but my poor patient? He puzzles me. I never knew a patient so faint hearted.'

'A soldier faint hearted!' exclaimed the baroness. 'To be sure these men that storm cities

and fire cannon, and cut and hack one another with so much spirit, are poor creatures compared with us when they have to lie quiet and suffer.'

'Josephine,' said the doctor, abruptly, 'do you know Colonel Dujardin's character?'

'No! yes! by the bulletins of the army—long ago.'

'Do you know his history?'

'No—yes. He told Laure: and she told me. He was taken prisoner in Spain. The cowards made him suffer tortures. Oh, doctor! he is alive by a miracle. I cannot think that Heaven will desert him now. Do send for Laure; she will tell you better than I can all he has gone through.'

'No,' said St. Aubin, 'you mistake me. That is not what I want to know. It is not the past but the present that gives me so much concern. Past dangers are present delights.'

'Doctor, what do you mean?'

'I mean this, that he ought to get well, and does not. But it is not my fault: no man can be cured without his own help: and he will not put a finger to the work. Patients complain of our indifference; it is not so here: I am all anxiety and zeal, and my sick man is his own bystander apathetic as a log.'

The doctor walked the room in great excitement.

'Ladies for pity's sake help me: get his history from him, and tell it me: you Josephine with your

instincts do for pity's sake help me: do throw off that sublime indifference you have manifested all along to this man's fate.'

'She has not,' cried the baroness firing up. 'She lined his dressing-gown for him; and she inspects everything that he eats: do you not?'

'Yes, mother.'

'Have patience my friend: time will cure your patient: and time alone.'

'Time! you speak as if time was a quality: time is only a measure of events, favourable or unfavourable: time kills as many as it cures.'

'Why doctor you surely would not imply his life is in any danger?'

'Should I be saying all this if it was not? Must I speak out? Well then I will. If some change does not take place soon, he will be a dead man in another fortnight. That is all *time* will do for him. Now.'

The baroness uttered an exclamation of pity and distress.

Josephine put her hand to her bosom, and a creeping horror came over her, and then a faintness. Suddenly she rushed from the room. In the passage she met Laure coming hastily towards the *salon* laughing: the first time she had laughed this many a day. Oh what a contrast between the two faces that met there—the one pale and horror stricken, the other rosy and laughing!

'Well dear, at last I am paid for all my trouble.

I have caught my lord out. What do you think he does? What is the matter?'

'Nothing—tell me! tell me!'

'You are agitated Josephine. My sister my sweet sister! What have they been doing to you now? You want my story first? Very well. Oh the doctor would be in a fine rage if he knew it.'

'The doctor?'

'Yes! it is soon told. Camille never takes a drop of his medicine. He pours it into the ashes under the grate. I saw him. I caught him in the act, ha! ha!'

Josephine stared wildly at Laure to hear her laugh.

'Ah! I forgot: you don't know—come!'

'Where to?'

'To *him*.'

Josephine paused on the first landing.

'Promise me not to contradict a word I shall say to him. I must hide my heart from him I love—yes, him I love, I adore, I worship. Ah! I have got you to whom I can tell the truth, or I could not go on the walking lie I am. I love him: I adore him: I will deceive him, and save him, and then lie down and die.'

'Be calm! pray be calm!' said Laure: 'Oh, that he had never been born! Say what you will, I will not speak. Shall I tell him you are coming?'

'No. Let me have every advantage: let me think beforehand every word I shall say: but take him by surprise, coward and double-face that I am.'

The sisters stood at the door. Josephine's heart beat audibly. She knocked: a faint voice said—'Come in.' She and Laure entered the room. Camille sat on the sofa, his head bowed over his hands. A glance showed Josephine that he was doggedly and resolutely thrusting himself into the grave. Thinking it was only Laure, for he had now lost all hope of seeing Josephine come in at the door, he never moved. Some one glided gently but rapidly up to him.

He looked up.

Josephine was kneeling to him.

He lifted his head with a start, and trembled all over.

'Camille, I am come to you to beg your pity, to appeal to your generosity, to ask a favour—I who deserve so little of you.'

'You have waited a long time,' said Camille agitated greatly; 'and so have I,' he added bitterly.

'Camille, you are killing one who loved you once, and who has been very weak and faithless, but not so wicked as she appears.'

'How am I killing you?'

'With remorse—to see you sinking into the tomb. Camille is this generous of you? Do I

not suffer enough? Would you make me a murderess?'

'Then why have you never been near me? I could forgive your weakness, but not your heartlessness.'

'It is my duty. I have no right to seek your society. If you really wanted mine you would get well, and so join us down stairs a week or two before you leave us.'

'How am I to get well? My heart is broken.'

'Be a man Camille. Do not fling away a soldier's life because a fickle worthless woman could not wait for you. Forgive like a man, or revenge yourself like a man. If you cannot forgive me, kill me. See I kneel at your feet. I will not resist you. Kill me!'

'I wish I could. Oh! if I could kill you with a look and myself with a wish! No man should ever take you from me then. We would be together in the grave at this hour. Do not tempt me, I say!'

And he cast a terrible look of love, and hatred, and despair upon her.

Her purple eye never winced; it poured back tenderness and affection in return.

He saw and turned away with a groan, and held out his hand to her.

She seized it and kissed it. 'You are great, you are generous; you will not strike me as a woman strikes—you will not die to drive me to despair.'

'Ah! you love me still!'

'No! no! no! my heart is dead. But I loved you once. When I had a right to love you. A woman cannot forget all. Can you? Yes! you can, to be revenged on poor silly Josephine.'

'I see: Love is gone—but pity remains—I thought that was gone too.'

'Yes Camille,' said Josephine in a whisper—'pity remains, and remorse and terror at what I have done to a man of whom I was never worthy.

'Well, madame, as you have come at last to me, and even do me the honour to ask me a favour—I shall try—if only out of courtesy—to—ah Josephine! Josephine! when did I ever refuse you anything?'

At this Josephine sank into a chair, and burst out crying. Camille, at this, began to cry too; and the two poor things sat a long way from one another, and sobbed bitterly.

The man, weakened as he was, recovered his quiet despair first.

'Don't cry so my poor soul!' said he. 'But tell me what is your will, and I shall obey you as I used before any one came between us.'

'Then! live, Camille! I implore you to live!'

'Well Josephine, since you care about it, I will live.'

'Since I care!—oh!—bless you Camille. How good you are: how generous you are. You have

promised—you keep your promises: you are not like me.'

'Why did not you come before and ask me? I thought I was in your way. I thought you wanted me dead.'

Josephine cast a look of wonder and anguish on Camille, but she said nothing. She rang the bell, and, on Jacintha coming up, she despatched her to Doctor St. Aubin for the patient's medicine.

'Tell the doctor,' said she, 'Colonel Dujardin has let fall the glass.'

While Jacintha was gone, she scolded Camille gently.

'How could you be so unkind to the poor doctor who loves you so?'

'What have I done to him?' asked Camille colouring.

'You throw away his medicines. Do you think I am blind. Look at the ashes; they are wet. Camille, are you too becoming disingenuous?'

'He gives me tonics that do me too much good; I could not die quick enough—there, forgive me. I have promised to live—I will live.'

Jacintha came in with the tonic in a glass, and retired with an obeisance.

Josephine took it to Camille.

'Drink with me, then,' said he, 'or I will not touch it.'

Josephine took the glass.

'I drink to your health Camille, and to your

glory; laurels to your brow my hero! and some faithful woman to your heart: who will make you forget this folly: it is for her I save you.' She put the glass with well-acted spirit to her lips: but in the very action a spasm seized her throat and almost choked her: she lowered her head that he might not see her face, and tried again; but the tears burst from her eyes and ran into the liquid and her lips trembled over the brim, and couldn't.

'Ah! give it me,' he cried: 'there is a tear of yours in it.

He drank off the bitter remedy now as if it had been nectar.

Josephine blushed.

'If you wanted me to live, why did you not come here before?'

'I did not think you would be so foolish, so wicked, so cruel as to do what you have been doing.'

'Josephine, come and shine upon me every day, and you shall have no fresh cause of complaint: things flourish in the sunshine that die in the dark: Laure it is as if the sun had come into my prison: you are pale, but you are beautiful as ever —more beautiful: what a sweet dress! so quiet, so modest, it sets off your beauty instead of vainly trying to vie with it.'

He put out his hand and took her grey silk dress and went to kiss it as a devotee kisses the altar steps.

She snatched it furiously away with a shudder.

'Yes, you are right,' said she: 'thank you for noticing my dress: it is a beautiful dress—ha! ha! A dress I take a pride in wearing, and always shall, I hope. I mean to be buried in it. Come Laure! Thank you Camille: you are very good, you have once more promised me to live. Get well: come down stairs; then you will see me every day you know—there is a temptation. Good-bye Camille!—are you coming Laure? What are you loitering for? God bless you, and comfort you, and help you to forget what it is madness to remember!'

She was gone.

The room seemed to darken to Camille.

Outside the door Josephine caught hold almost fiercely of Laure.

'Have I committed myself?'

'Over and over again. Do not look so terrified: I mean to me: but not to him. Oh! what a fool he is! and how much better you must know him than I do to venture on such a transparent deceit. He believes whatever you tell him. He is all ears, and no eyes. Yes, love, I watched him keenly all the time. He really thinks it is pity and remorse; nothing more. My poor sister you have a hard life to lead—a hard game to play: but so far you have succeeded: yet could look poor Raynal in the face if he came home to-day.'

'Then God be thanked,' cried Josephine. 'I

am as happy to-day as I can ever hope to be. Now let us go through the farce of dressing; it is near dinner-time; and then the farce of talking, and hardest of all, the farce of living.'

From that hour Camille began to get better very slowly, yet perceptibly.

The doctor, afraid of being mistaken, said nothing for some days, but at last he announced the good news at the dinner table. It was no news to either of the sisters. Laure had watched every symptom, and had told Josephine. 'He is to come down stairs in three days,' added the doctor.

The baroness.—'Thank heaven! and now that anxiety is removed, I do hope you will have time to cure her who is dearer to us than all the world.'

Josephine.—'Mother, there is nothing the matter with me.'

Baroness.—'Then why do you answer? I mentioned nobody.'

Josephine was confused: the doctor smiled; but he said kindly—'Indeed, you look pale, and somewhat thinner.'

Baroness.—'Thinner? What wonder when she eats nothing?'

St. Aubin.—'Is this true? Do you eat nothing?'

Josephine.—'I eat as much as I require. I have often heard you say we should eat no more than we can relish.'

St. Aubin.—'She is right. Perhaps we dine too early for you. I observe you don't seem to enjoy your dinner,'

Josephine.—'Enjoy—my dinner?'

St. Aubin.—'Why not? You are not an angel in body though you are in mind: and if you don't enjoy your dinner there is something wrong. However, perhaps Jacintha does not give us the dishes you like.'

Josephine.—'No! no! it is not that. All dishes taste like one to me.'

St. Aubin.—'What do they taste like?'

Josephine.—'Like?—like all the same—quite tasteless. Don't tease me? What does it matter?'

Baroness.—'There doctor—there: see how fretful the poor child is getting.'

St. Aubin.—'I see madame, and divine the cause. Now Madame Raynal, let us be serious. I understand you to say that a slice of this mutton or of that chicken taste the same to you; or to speak more correctly, have no taste?'

Josephine.—'None whatever.'

St. Aubin.—'BILE!!!!!'

Camille, bribed by the hope of seeing Josephine every day, turned his mind seriously towards getting well; and, as his disorder had been lethargy, not disease, he improved visibly. But, as his body strengthened, some of the worst passions in our nature attacked him.

Fierce gusts of hate and love combined overpowered this man's high sentiments of honour and justice, and made him clench his teeth, and vow never to leave Beaurepaire without Josephine. She had been his four years before she ever saw Raynal, and she should be his for ever. Her love would soon revive when they should meet every day, and—

Then conscience pricked him, and reminded him how and why Raynal had married her: for Laure had told him all. Should he undermine an absent soldier, whose whole conduct in this had been so pure, so generous, so unselfish?

But this was not all.

Strange to say, he was under a great personal obligation to his quondam comrade Raynal, of which more by and by.

Whenever this was vividly present to his mind, a great terror fell on him, and he would cry out in anguish—'Oh! that some angel would come to me and tear me by force from this place.'

And the next moment passion swept over him like a flood, and carried away all his virtuous resolves. His soul was in deep waters: great waves drove it to and fro. Perilous condition, which seldom ends well.

Camille was a man in whom honour sat throned.

In no other earthly circumstance could he have hesitated an instant between right and wrong But such natures, proof against all other tempta-

tions, have often fallen, and will fall, where sin takes the angel form of her they love. Yet, of all men, they should pray for help to stand: for fallen, they still retain one thing that divides them from mean sinners.

Remorse—the giant that rends the great hearts that mock at fear.

CHAPTER X.

The day came in which the doctor had promised his patient he should come down stairs. First his comfortable sofa was taken down into the saloon for his use: then the patient himself came down leaning on the doctor's arm, and his heart palpitating at the thought of the meeting. He came into the room: the baroness was alone. She greeted him kindly, and welcomed him. Laure came in soon after and did the same. But no Josephine. Camille felt sick at heart. At last dinner was announced: 'she will surely join us at dinner,' thought he. He cast his eyes anxiously on the table: the napkins were laid for four only. The baroness carelessly explained this to him as they sat down.

'Madame Raynal dines in her own room. I am sorry to say she is indisposed.'

Camille muttered polite regrets: the rage of disappointment drove its fangs into him, and then came the hollow aching of hope deferred. The

next day he saw her, but could not get a word with her alone. The baroness tortured him another way. She was full of Raynal. She loved him. She called him her son: was never weary of descanting on his virtues to Camille. Not a day passed that she did not pester Camille to make a calculation as to the probable period of his return; and he was obliged to answer her. She related to him before Josephine and Laure, how this honest soldier had come to them like a guardian angel and saved the whole family. In vain he muttered that Laure had told him.

'Let me have the pleasure of telling it you my way,' cried she, and told it diffusely.

The next thing was, Josephine had received no letter from him this month: the first month he had missed. In vain did Laure represent that he was only a few days over his time. The baroness became anxious, communicated her anxieties to Camille among the rest: and by a torturing interrogatory compelled him to explain to her before them all that ships do not always sail to a day, and are sometimes delayed. But oh! he writhed at the man's name: and Laure observed that he never mentioned it, nor acknowledged the existence of such a person as Josephine's husband, except when others compelled him. Yet they were acquainted: and Laure wondered that he did not sometimes detract or sneer.

'I should,' said she, 'I know I should.'

'He is too noble,' said Josephine, 'and too wise. If he did I should respect him less, and my husband more—if possible.'

Certainly Camille was not the sort of nature that detracts, but the reason he avoided Raynal's name was simply that his whole battle was to forget such a man existed. From this dream he was rudely awakened every hour since he joined the family, and the wound his self-deceiving heart would fain have skinned over, was torn open. But worse than this was the torture of being tantalized. He was in company with Josephine, but never alone. Even if she left the room for an instant, Laure accompanied her and returned with her. Camille at last began to comprehend that Josephine had decided there should be no private interviews between her and him. Thus not only the shadow of the absent Raynal stood between them, but her mother and sister in person, and, worst of all, her own will.

'Cold-blooded fiend,' he cried in his rage, 'you never loved me: you never will really love anyone.'

Then the thought of all her tenderness and goodness came to rebuke him. But even in rebuking it maddened him. 'Yes! it is her very nature to love: but since she can make her heart turn whichever way her honour bids, she will love her husband: she does not now; but sooner or later she will—then she will have children. He

writhed with anguish and fury at this thought: loving ties between him and her. He has everything on his side. I nothing but memories she will efface from her heart. Will efface? She must have effaced them, or she could not have married him.' He rose and went out into the Pleasance. He felt as if all must see the frightful tempest in his heart. He went into the Park, and wandered wildly. He was in that state in which men commit acts that the next moment they look back on with wonder as well as horror.

He wandered, and wandered by the side of the brook, and at each turn where the stagnant current showed a deeper pool than usual he stopped, and looked, and thought, 'how calm and peaceful you are!'

He sat down at last by the waterside, his eyes bent on a calm, green pool.

'You are very calm and peaceful, and you could give me your peace. No more rage—no more jealousy—no more despair. It is a sordid death for a soldier to die who has seen great battles. When I was a boy—ah! why cannot I be a boy again?—then I read of a Spartan soldier that was on a sinking ship—there was no hope—no more there is for me. He drew his sword, and fell on it ere the ship could sink. I can understand that man's heart. I am of his mind. Still we must do the best we can. Ah! what is this? my pistols. The present my old comrades sent me

while I lay between life and death. Why did not I die then?

'No matter: I am glad I have got my pistols. How strange I should put them away into this coat, and put the coat on without knowing it. All these things are preordained.

'To go without a word with her—a parting word. No! it is best so. For *I should have taken her with me.*'

'Sir! colonel!' uttered a harsh, dry voice behind him.

Camille started.

Absorbed and strung up to desperation as he was, this voice seemed unnaturally loud, and discordant with his mood; a sudden trumpet from the world of small things.

Picard the notary stood behind him.

'Can you tell me where Madame Raynal is?'

'No. At the chateau I suppose.'

'She is not there: I inquired of the servant. She was out. You have not seen her, colonel?'

'I! no.'

'Then perhaps I had better go back to the chateau and wait for her: stay, you are a friend of the family. Colonel, suppose I were to tell you, and ask you to tell Madame Raynal, or better still to tell the baroness, or Mademoiselle Laure.'

'Monsieur,' said Camille coldly, 'charge me with no messages, for I shall not deliver them. I am going another way.'

'In that case monsieur, I will go to the chateau once more.'

'Go!'

Picard went, wondering at the colonel's strange manner.

Camille wondered that anyone could be so mad as to talk to him about trifles—to him a man standing on the brink of eternity. Poor soul it was he who was mad and unlucky. He should have heard what Picard had to say. Notaries are not embarrassed, and hesitating to whom to speak, for nothing.

He watched Picard's retiring form. When he was out of sight then he turned round and resumed his thoughts as if Picard had been no more than a fly that had buzzed and then gone.

'Yes, I should have taken her with me.' He sat gloomy and dogged like a dangerous maniac in his cell: never moved, scarce thought for more than half an hour: but his deadly purpose grew in him. Suddenly he started, a lady was at the stile, about a hundred yards distant. He trembled. It was Josephine.

She came towards him slowly, her eyes bent on the ground in a deep reverie. She stopped about a stone's throw from him, and looked at the river long and thoughtfully: then casting her eyes around she caught sight of Camille. He watched her grimly. He saw her give a little start, and half turn round; but if this was an impulse to

retreat, it was instantly suppressed: for the next moment she pursued her way.

Camille stood gloomy and bitter, awaiting her in silence. He planted himself in the middle of the path.

She looked him all over, and her colour came and went.

'Out so far as this Camille,' she said kindly. 'Well done, but where is your cap?'

He put his hand to his head, and discovered that he was bare headed.

'You will catch your death of cold. Come let us go in and get your cap.'

She made as if she would pass him. He planted himself right before her.

'No.'

'Monsieur!'

'You shun me.'

'No, I do not shun you, Camille.'

'You shun me.'

'I have avoided conferences that can lead to no good: it is my duty.'

'You are very wise: cold-hearted people can be wise.'

'Am I cold hearted, Camille?'

'As marble.'

She looked him in the face: the water came into her eyes: after a while she whispered—

'Well Camille, I am.'

'But with all your wisdom and all your coldness

you have made a mistake: you have driven me to despair.'

'Heaven forbid!'

'Your prayer comes too late; you have done it.'

'Camille, let me go to the oratory and pray for you. You terrify me.'

'Useless. Heaven has no mercy for me. Take my advice, stay where you are—don't hurry—since what remains of your life you are to pass with me—do you understand that?'

'Ah!'

'Can you read my riddle?'

'I can read your eyes, and I know you love me. I think you mean to kill me. Men kill the thing they love.'

'Ay! sooner than another should have it, they kill it—they kill it.'

'God has not made them patient like us women—poor Camille!'

'Patience dies when hope dies. Come Madame Raynal, say a prayer, for you are going to die.'

'God bless you Camille!' said the poor girl, putting her hands together.

Camille hung his head, then lashing himself into fury, he cried—

'You are my betrothed, you talk of duty—but you forget your duty to me. Are you not my betrothed this four years? Answer me that?'

'Yes, Camille.'

'Did I not suffer death a hundred times for you; to keep faith with you, you cold-blooded traitress with an angel's face.'

'Oh! Camille, why do you speak so bitterly to me? Have I denied your right to kill me? You shall never dishonour me, but you shall kill me, if it is your pleasure. I do not resist. Why then speak to me like that—must the last words I hear from your mouth be words of anger, cruel Camille?'

'I was wrong. But it is hard to kill her I love in cold blood. I want anger as well as despair to keep me to it; well, turn your head away from me.'

'Oh no Camille, let me look at you. Then you will be the last thing I shall see on earth.'

He hesitated a moment: then, with a fierce stamp at his own weakness, he levelled a pistol at her.

She put up her hands, with a piteous cry—

'Oh! not my face, Camille! pray do not disfigure my face! Here—kill me here—in my bosom—my heart that loved you well, when it was no sin to love you.'

'I can't shoot you. I can't spill your blood, Josephine.'

'Poor Camille!'

'This will end all, and not disfigure your beauty, that has driven me mad, and cost you, poor wretch, your life.'

'Thank you, dear Camille. The water does not frighten me as a pistol does—it will not hurt me—it will only kill me.'

'No, it is but a plunge, and you will be at peace for ever—and so shall I—come. Take my hand, Madame Raynal — Madame Raynal — Madame Raynal!'

'What, you too?' and she drew back. 'Oh! Camille, my poor mother! and Laure, who loves me so!'

'Ah! I forgot them.'

He was silent a moment, then suddenly shrieked out—

'Fly, Josephine, fly! escape this moment, that my better angel whispers to me. Do you hear? begone, while it is time.'

'I will not leave you, Camille.'

'I say you shall. Go to your mother and Laure—go to those you love, and I can bear you to love. Go to the chapel, and thank Heaven for your escape.'

'I will not go without you Camille. I am afraid to leave you.'

'You have more to fear if you stay.' 'Well, I can't wait any longer. Stay, then, and learn from me how to love.'

He levelled the pistol at himself.

Josephine threw herself on him with a cry, and seized his arm. They struggled fiercely. It was

not till after a long and mighty effort that he threw her off. But he did throw her off, and raised the pistol rapidly to take his life.

But this time, ere the deadly weapon could take effect, she palsied his suicidal hand with a word—

'No! I LOVE YOU!'

CHAPTER XI.

THERE lie the dead corpses of those words on paper: but oh! my art is powerless to tell you how they were uttered—those words, potent as a king's, that saved a life.

They were a cry of terror.

They were a cry of reproach.

They were a cry of love unfathomable.

The weapon shook in his hand. He looked at her with growing astonishment and joy.

She looked at him fixedly and anxiously, her hands clasped in supplication.

'Not as you used to love me!'

'More, far more. Give me the pistol. I love you dearest. I love you.'

At these delicious words he lost all power of resistance; her soft and supple hand closed upon his, and gently withdrew the weapon and threw it into the water. 'Good Camille!—now give me the other.'

'How do you know there is another?'

'You love me, Camille—you never meant to kill me and spare yourself—come.'

'Josephine, I am so unhappy—do not deceive me—pray do not take this one from me, unless you really love me.'

'I love you—I adore you!'

She leaned her head on his shoulder, but with her hand she sought his, and even as she uttered those loving words she coaxed the weapon from his now unresisting grasp.

'There—it is gone, you are saved from death—saved from worse, from crime.' The danger over, she trembled for the first time, and sobbed hysterically.

He fell at her knees, and embraced them again and again, and begged her forgiveness in a transport of remorse and self-reproach.

She looked down with tender pity on him, and heard his cries of penitence and shame.

'I think only of what you have to suffer now.'

'Let it come! it will fall light on me now. I thought I had lost your love.'

'No, it will not fall light on you nor on me. Rise Camille, and go home with me,' said she faintly.

'Yes Josephine.'

They went slowly and in silence. Camille was too ashamed and penitent to speak—too full of terror too at the abyss of crime from which he had been saved. The ancients feigned that a virgin could subdue a lion; they meant by this that a pure gentle nature can subdue a nature fierce but

generous. Lion-like Camille walked by Josephine's side with his eyes bent on the ground, a picture of humility and penitence.

'Camille, this is the last walk you and I shall take together.'

'I know it. I have forfeited all right to be by your side.'

'My poor friend, will you never understand me? You never stood higher in my esteem than at this moment. It is the avowal you have forced from me that parts us. The man to whom I have said "I—" must not remain beneath my husband's roof. Does not your sense of honour agree with mine?'

'Josephine,' faltered Camille, 'it does.'

'To-morrow you must leave the chateau.'

'Must I Josephine?'

'What, you do not resist, you do not break my heart by complaints, by reproaches?'

'No Josephine—all is changed. I thought you unfeeling: I thought you were going to be *happy* with him—that was what maddened me.'

'Camille I pray daily *you* may be happy, no matter how. But you and I are not alike, dear as we are to one another. Well do not fear: I shall never be happy—will that soothe you, Camille?'

'Yes Josephine, all is changed, the words you have spoken have driven the fiends out of my heart. I have nothing to do now but to obey, you to command—it is your right. Since you love me

dispose of me. Bid me live: bid me die: bid me stay: bid me go. I shall never disobey the angel who loves me—my only friend upon the earth.'

A single deep sob from Josephine was all the answer.

'Why did you not trust me beloved one? Why did you not say to me long ago—"I love you, but I am a wife; my husband is an honest soldier, absent, and fighting for France: I am the guardian of his honour and my own: be just, be generous, be self-denying; depart and love me only as angels love?" You gave me no chance of showing that I too am a person of honour.'

'I was wrong Camille. I think I should have trusted more to you. But who would have thought you could really doubt my love? You were ill: I could not bear you to go till you were well, quite well. I saw no other way to keep you but this, to treat you with feigned coldness. You saw the coldness, but not what it cost me to maintain it. Yes I was unjust and inconsiderate, for I had many furtive joys to sustain me: I had you in my house under my care—that thought was always sweet—I had a hand in every thing that was for your good, for your comfort. I helped Jacintha make your soup, and your chocolate every day. I lined your dressing gown: I had always some little thing or other to do for you. These kept me up: I forgot in my selfishness that you had none of these supports, and

that I was driving you to despair. I am a foolish, disingenuous woman: I have been very culpable. Forgive me!'

'Forgive you, angel of purity and goodness? I am alone to blame. What right had I to doubt your heart? I knew the whole story of your marriage—I saw your sweet pale face—but I was not pure enough to comprehend angelic virtue and unselfishness. Well, I am brought to my senses. God has been very good to me this day. He has saved me from—there is but one thing for me to do—you bade me leave you to-morrow.'

'I was very cruel.'

'No! not cruel; wise. But I will be wiser. I shall go to-night.'

'To-night, Camille?' said Josephine turning pale.

'Ay! for to-night I am strong—to-morrow I may be weak. To-night everything thrusts me on the right path. To-morrow everything will draw me from it. Do not cry beloved one—you and I have a hard fight; we must be true allies: whenever one is weak, then is the time for the other to be strong. I have been weaker than you, to my shame be it said: but this is my hour of strength. A light from heaven shows me my path. I am full of passion, but like you I have honour. You are Raynal's wife—and—Raynal saved my life.'

'Ah! is it possible? When?, where?—may Heaven bless him for it!'

'So you see you were right—this is no place for one so little master of himself as I am. I shall go to-night.'

'It is so late—too late to get a conveyance.'

'I need none to carry my sword, my epaulettes, and my love for you. I shall go on foot.'

Josephine raised no more objections: she walked slower and slower.

'Thank you beloved one,' said Camille. And so the unfortunate pair came along creeping slowly with drooping heads towards the gate of the Pleasance. There their last walk in this world must end. Many a man and woman have gone to the scaffold with hearts less heavy and more hopeful than theirs.

'Dry your eyes, Josephine. They are all out on the Pleasance.'

'No, I will not dry my eyes,' cried Josephine, almost violently. 'I care for nothing now.'

The baroness, the doctor, and Laure, were all in the Pleasance: and as the pair came in every eye was bent on Josephine.

She felt this, and at another time it would have confused her: but the cold recklessness of despondency was on her. Camille on the other hand, spite of his deep misery, felt a shudder of misgiving.

'They are all looking out for us,' said he to himself: he had a vague unreasonable fear that they suspected him; thought Josephine unsafe in his company. He stood with downcast eyes.

Nobody took any notice of him.

The baroness with a trembling voice, said to Josephine—

'Come with me my poor child,' and drew her apart.

Laure followed them with her eyes bent on the ground.

The doctor paced up and down with a sad and troubled face.

Even he took no notice of Camille.

So at last Camille came to him and said—

'Monsieur, the time is come that I must once more thank you for all your goodness to me, and bid you farewell.'

'What, are you going before your strength is re-established?'

'I am out of all danger, thanks to your skill.'

'Colonel, at another time I should insist upon your staying a day or two longer; but now—ah! colonel, you came to a happy house, but you leave a sad one. Poor Madame Raynal!!'

'Monsieur!'

'You saw the baroness draw her aside.'

'Y-yes.'

'By this time she knows all.'

'Monsieur you torture me. In Heaven's name! what do you mean?'

'I forgot; you do not know the calamity that has fallen upon our beloved Josephine—on the darling of the house.'

Camille turned cold with apprehension.

But he said faintly—

'No; tell me!—for Heaven's sake tell me!'

'My poor friend,' said the doctor solemnly, 'HER HUSBAND IS DEAD!'

CHAPTER XII.

Camille realized nothing at first—he looked all confused in the doctor's face, and was silent. Then after a while he said—

'What? Who? Dead?'

'Raynal has been killed in action.'

A red flush came to Camille's face, and his eyes went down to the ground at his very feet, nor did he once raise them while the doctor told him how the sad news had come.

'Picard the notary brought us the *Moniteur*, and there was poor Raynal among the killed in a cavalry skirmish; and—my friend would you believe it?—there was another Raynal in this same action—a Colonel Raynal. He was only wounded; but Commandant Raynal—our Raynal, our hero, our benefactor, our mainstay—must be killed. Ah! we are unfortunates! You share our sorrow colonel? He was an old comrade of yours—poor fellow.'

'*He saved my life.*'

Camille's eyes never left his feet.

'Excuse me colonel; I must go to my poor friend the baroness. She had a mother's love for him who is no more—well she might.'

St. Aubin went away, and left Dujardin standing there like a statue, his eyes still glued to the ground at his feet.

The doctor was no sooner out of sight, than Camille raised his eyes furtively, like a guilty person, and looked irresolutely this way and that: at last he went in and got his cap, then came out again and went back to the place where he had meditated suicide and murder; looked down at it a long while—then looked up to heaven—then fell suddenly on his knees—and so remained till nightfall.

Then he came back to the chateau.

He said to himself—'And it is too late to go away to-night.' He went softly into the saloon. Nobody was there but Laure and St. Aubin. At sight of him Laure rose and left the room. She returned in a few minutes, and rang the bell, and ordered some supper to be brought up for Colonel Dujardin.

'You have not dined,' said she, coldly.

'I was afraid you were gone altogether,' said the doctor. 'He told me he was going this evening Laure. You had better stay quiet another day or two,' added he kindly.

'Do you think so?' said Camille timidly.

Mean time the baroness drew Josephine aside, and tried to break to her the sad news: but her own grief overcame her and bursting into tears she bewailed the loss of her son. Josephine was greatly shocked. Death!—Raynal dead—her true kind friend dead—her benefactor dead. She clung to her mother's neck, and sobbed with her. Presently she withdrew her face and suddenly hid it in both her hands.

She rose and kissed her mother once more: and went to her own room: and then though there was none to see her, she hid her wet but burning cheeks in her hands.

Josephine confined herself for some days to her own room. Leaving it only to go to the chapel in the park, where she spent hours in prayers for the dead and in self humiliation. Her 'tender conscience' accused herself bitterly for not having loved this gallant spirit more than she had.

Camille, too, was not free from self-reproach.

He said to himself, 'Did I wish him dead? I hope I never formed such a thought! I don't remember ever wishing him dead.' And he went twice a day to that place by the stream, and thought very solemnly what a terrible thing ungoverned passion is; and repented—not eloquently, but silently—sincerely. But soon his impatient spirit began to torment itself again. Why did Josephine shun him now? Ah! she loved Raynal now that he was dead. Women love the thing they have

lost; so he had heard say. In that case, the very sight of him would of course be odious to her: he could understand that. The absolute unreasoning faith he once had in her had been so rudely shaken by her marriage with Raynal, that now he could only believe just so much as he saw, and he saw that she shunned him.

He became moody, sad, and disconsolate: and as Josephine shunned him, so he avoided all the others, and wandered for hours by himself, perplexed and miserable. After a while, he became conscious that he was under a sort of surveillance. Laure de Beaurepaire, who had been so kind to him when he was confined to his own room, but had taken little notice of him since he came down, now resumed her care of him, and evidently made it her business to keep up his heart. She used to meet him out walking in a mysterious way, and in short, be always falling in with him and trying to cheer him up: with very partial success.

CHAPTER XIII.

Edouard Riviere retarded his cure by an impatient spirit: but he got well at last, and his uncle drove him in the cabriolet to his own quarters. He had received one letter from Laure, one from th e baroness, and tw from St. Aubin: and in these letters the news of the house had been told him, but, of course, in so vague and general a way that, thinking he knew all, in reality he knew nothing.

Josephine had married Raynal. The marriage was sudden, but no doubt there was an attachment: he believed in sudden attachments: he had some reason to. Colonel Dujardin, an old acquaintance, had come back to France wounded, and the good doctor had undertaken his cure: this incident appeared neither strange nor any way important. What affected him most deeply was the death of Raynal, his personal friend and patron. But when his tyrants, as he called the surgeon and his uncle, gave him leave to go home, all feelings were overpowered by his great joy at the prospect of seeing

Laure. He walked over to Beaurepaire, his arm in a sling, his heart beating. He was coming to receive the reward of all he had done, and all he had attempted. 'I will surprise them,' thought he. 'I will see her face when I come in at the door: oh, happy hour! this pays for all.' He entered the house without announcing himself; he went softly up to the saloon; to his great disappointment he found no one but the baroness: she received him kindly, but not with the warmth he expected. She was absorbed in her new grief. He asked timidly after her daughters. 'Madame Raynal bears up, for the sake of others. You will not, however, see her: she keeps her room. My daughter Laure is taking a walk, I believe.' After some polite inquiries, and sympathy with his accident, the baroness retired to indulge her grief, and Edouard thus liberated ran in search of his beloved.

He had not far to go.

He met her at the gate of the Pleasance, but not alone. She was walking with an officer—a handsome, commanding, haughty, brilliant officer. She was walking by his side, talking earnestly to him.

An arrow of ice shot through young Riviere; and then came a feeling of death at his heart, a new symptom in his young life.

The next moment Laure caught sight of him. She flushed all over, and uttered a little exclama-

tion, and she bounded towards him like a little antelope, and put out both her hands at once. He could only give her one.

'Ah!' she cried with an accent of heavenly pity, and took his hand with both hers.

This was like the meridian sun coming suddenly on a cold place. His misgivings could not stand against it.

When Josephine heard he was come her eye flashed, and she said quickly—

'I will come down to welcome him—dear Edouard!'

The sisters looked at one another. Josephine blushed. Laure smiled and kissed her. She coloured higher still.

When the time came Josephine hesitated.

'I am ashamed to go down.'

'Why?'

'Look at my face!'

'I see nothing wrong with it, except that it eclipses other people's: there is that inconvenience.'

'Oh yes dear Laure: look what a colour it has, and a fortnight ago it was pale as ashes.'

'Never mind, do you expect me to regret it?'

'Laure I am a very bad woman.'

'Are you dear?—hook this for me.'

'Yes love! But I sometimes think you would forgive me if you knew how hard I pray to be better. Laure, I do try so to be as unhappy as I

ought; but I can't—I can't. My heart seems as dead to unhappiness, as once it was to happiness; am I a heartless woman after all?'

'Not altogether,' said Laure drily. 'Fasten my collar, dear; and don't torment yourself. You have suffered much and nobly. It was Heaven's will—you bowed to it. It was not Heaven's will that you should be blighted altogether. Bow in this, too, to Heaven's will! take things as they come, and cease to try to reconcile feelings that are too opposite to live together.'

'Ah! these are such comfortable words, Laure: but mamma will see this dreadful colour in my cheek, and what can I say to her?'

'Ten to one it will not be observed; and if it should, I will say it is the excitement of seeing Edouard. Leave all to me.'

Josephine greeted Edouard most affectionately, drew from him his whole history, and petted him and sympathized with him deliciously, and made him the hero of the evening. Camille, who was not naturally of a jealous temper, bore this very well at first: but at last he looked so bitter at her neglect of him, that Laure took him aside to soothe him. Edouard, missing the auditor he most valued, and seeing her in secret conference with the brilliant Colonel, felt a return of the jealous pangs that had seized him at first sight of the man: and so they played at cross purposes.

At another period of the evening the conversa-

tion became more general and Edouard took a dislike to Colonel Dujardin. A young man of twenty-eight nearly always looks on a boy of twenty-one with the air of a superior, and this assumption, not being an ill-natured one, is apt to be so easy and so undefined that the younger hardly knows how to resent or to resist it. But Edouard was a little vain as we know; and the Colonel jarred him terribly. His quick haughty eye jarred him. His regimentals jarred him: they fitted like a glove. His moustache and his manner jarred him, and worst of all his cool familiarity with Laure, who seemed to court him rather than be courted by him. He put this act of Laure's to the Colonel's account, according to the custom of lovers, and revenged himself in a small way by telling Josephine in her ear 'that the Colonel produced on his mind the effect of a puppy.'

Josephine coloured up and looked at him with a momentary surprise: she said quietly, 'military men do give themselves some airs—but he is very amiable at bottom—at least so Laure says—so they all say. You must make acquaintance with him, and then he will reveal to you his nobler qualities.' Oh 'I have no particular desire' sneered Edouard. Josephine said nothing, but soon after she quietly turned Edouard over to St. Aubin, while she joined Laure, and under cover of her had a sweet timid chat with her falsely accused.

This occupied the two so entirely that Edouard

made his adieus to the baroness, and marched off in dudgeon unobserved.

Laure missed him first, but said nothing.

When Josephine saw he was gone, she uttered a little exclamation, and looked at Laure. Laure put on a mien of haughty indifference, but the water was in her eyes.

Josephine looked sorrowful.

When they talked over everything together at night, she reproached herself. 'We behaved ill to poor Edouard; we neglected him.'

'He is a little cross ill-tempered fellow,' said Laure, pettishly.

'Oh no! no!'

'And as vain as a peacock.'

'Laure, in this house has he not some right to be vain?'

'Yes,—no. I am very angry with him. I wont hear a word in his favour' said Laure pouting: then she gave his defender a kiss, 'yes dear' said Josephine, answering the kiss, and ignoring the words, 'He is a dear; and he is not cross, nor so very vain, poor boy—now don't you see what it was?'

'No.'

'Yes, you do you little cunning thing: you are too shrewd not to see everything.'

'No, indeed Josephine—do tell me—don't keep me waiting?'

'Well then—jealous!!'

'Jealous? Oh what fun—who of? Of Camille? Ha! Ha! Little goose!'

'And Laure I almost think he would be jealous of any one that occupied your attention. I watched him.'

'All the better. I'll torment my lord.'

'Heaven forbid you should be so cruel.'

'Oh! I will not make him unhappy, but I'll tease him a little: it is not in nature not to.'

This foible detected in her lover, Laure was very gay at the prospect of amusement it afforded her.

And I think I have many readers who at this moment are awaiting unmixed enjoyment and hilarity from the same source.

'Ah!'

Edouard called the next day: he wore a gloomy air. Laure met this with a particularly cheerful one; on this Edouard's face cleared up, and he was himself again—agreeable as this was Laure felt a little disappointed. 'I am afraid he is not jealous after all,' thought she.

Josephine left her room this day and mingled once more with the family. The bare sight of her was enough for Camille at first; but after a while he wanted more. He wanted to be often alone with her,—but several causes co-operated to make her shy of giving him many such opportunities. First her natural delicacy coupled with her habit of self denial, then her fear of shocking her mother,

and lastly her fear of her own heart, and of Camille whose power over her she knew. For Camille, when he did get a sweet word alone with her, seemed to forget everything except that she was his betrothed, and that he had come back alive to marry her. He spoke to her of his love with an ardour and an urgency that made her thrill with happiness, and at the same time shrink with a certain fear, and self reproach. Possessed with a feeling no stronger than hers, but single, he did not comprehend the tumult, the trouble, the daily contest in her heart. The wind seemed to him to be always changing, and hot and cold the same hour. Since he did not even see that she was acting in hourly fear of her mother's eye, he was little likely to penetrate her more hidden sentiments; and then he had not touched her key note, —self denial.

Women are self denying and uncandid. Men are are self indulgent, and outspoken.

And this is the key to a thousand double misunderstandings; for good women are just as stupid in misunderstanding men, as good men are in misunderstanding women.

To Camille Josephine's fluctuations, joys, tremors, love, terror, modesty, seemed one grand total-caprice. The component parts of it he saw not; and her caprice tortured him almost to madness. Too penitent to give way again to violent passion, he fretted. His health retrograded and his temper

began to sour. The eye of timid love that watched him with maternal anxiety from under its long lashes saw this with dismay,—and Laure, who looked into her sister's bosom, devoted herself once more to soothe him without compromising Josephine's delicacy. Hence arose mystification No. 3. Riviere's natural jealousy being once awakened found constant food in the attention Laure paid Camille. The false position of all the parties brought about some singular turns. I give from their number one that forms a link though a small one in my narrative.

One day, Edouard found Laure alone in the Pleasance; she received him with a radiant smile and they had a charming talk, a talk, all about *him*; what the family owed him, etc.

On this, his late jealousy and sense of injury, seemed a thing of three years ago, and never to return.

Jacintha came with a message from the Colonel, 'Would it be agreeable to Mademoiselle Laure to walk with him at the usual hour?'

'Certainly,' said Laure.

As Jacintha was retiring Edouard called to her to stop a minute.

'May I beg you to reconsider that determination?' said he to Laure politely.

'What determination?'

'To sacrifice me to this Colonel Dujardin?' still politely, only a little grimly.

'Laure opened her eyes. 'Are you mad?' inquired she with quiet hauteur.

'Neither mad nor a fool,' was the reply. 'I love you too well to share your regard with any one, upon any terms; least of all upon these, that there is to be a man in the world, at whose beck and call you are to be, and at whose orders you are to break off an interview with me. Perdition!'

'Edouard what folly. Can you suspect me of discourtesy, as well as of,—I know not what. Colonel Dujardin will join us, that is all, and we shall take a little walk with him.'

'Not I.—I decline the intrusion: you are engaged with me and I have things to say to you that are not fit for that puppy to hear. Choose therefore between me and him, and choose for ever.'

Laure coloured, but smiled. 'I should be very sorry to choose either of you for ever, but for this afternoon I choose you.'

'Oh thank you—my whole life shall prove my gratitude, for this preference.'

Laure beckoned Jacintha and sent her with an excuse to Colonel Dujardin. She then turned with air of mock submission to Edouard. I am at monsieur's *orders*.'

Edouard, radiant with triumph, and naturally good natured, thanked her again and again for her condescension in setting his heart at rest. He proposed a walk, since his interference had

lost her one. She yielded a cold assent. This vexed him, but he took it for granted it would wear off before the end of the walk. Edouard's heart bounded, but he loved her too sincerely to be happy unless he could see her happy too: the malicious thing saw this, or perhaps knew it by instinct, and by means of this good feeling of his she revenged herself for his tyranny. She tortured him as only a woman can torture, and as even she can torture only a worthy man, and one who loves her. In the course of that short walk this inexperienced girl, strong in the instincts and inborn arts of her sex, drove pins and needles, needles and pins, of all sorts and sizes, through her lover's heart.

She was everything by turns, except kind,—and nothing for long together. She was peevish, she was ostentatiously patient and submissive, she was inattentive to her companion and seemingly wrapped up in contemplation of absent things and persons, the Colonel to wit. She was dogged, repulsive, and as cold as ice; and she never was herself a single moment. They returned to the gate of the Pleasance, 'Well mademoiselle,' said Riviere very sadly 'that interloper might as well have been with us.'

'Of course he might, and you would have lost nothing by permitting me to be courteous to a guest and an invalid. If you had not played the tyrant, and taken the matter into your own hands,

I should have found means to soothe your zeal,—your vanity: but you preferred to have your own way. Well, you have had it.'

'Yes, mademoiselle, you have given me a lesson, you have shown me how idle it is to attempt to force a young lady's inclinations in anything. I shall not however offend again; for I am going away.'

'Oh, are you,' she did not believe him.

'Yes, mademoiselle. I am sorry to say I am promoted.'

'Sorry you are promoted?'

'I mean I was sorry this morning; because my new post is ten leagues from Beaurepaire; but now I am not sorry, for, were I to stay here, I foresee you would soon lose whatever friendly feeling you have for me.'

'I am then very changeable? I am not considered so:' remonstrated Laure gently.

Riviere explained; 'I am not vain, no man less so, nor am I jealous: but I respect myself, and I could never be content to share your time and your regard with Colonel Dujardin, or with a much better man.'

'Monsieur,' began Laure, angrily—then she reflected. 'Mons. Edouard' said she kindly, 'if you were not going to leave us, (only for a time I trust,) I should be angry, and let you think—ay nonsense, and so vex yourself and affront me monsieur: but it is no time for teasing you: my

friend, be reasonable—be just to yourself and me—do not give way to ridiculous fancies: do not raise to a false importance this poor man, who is nothing to you, nothing to me—upon my honour.'

'Dear Mademoiselle Laure,' said Edouard, 'see what this person, who, after your words, I am bound to believe is indifferent to you, has done. He has made me arrogant and imperious to you. Was I ever so before?

No! no! no! and I forgive you now my poor friend.'

'He has made you cold as ice to me?'

'No! that was my own wickedness and spitefulness.'

'Wickedness, spitefulness! they are not in your nature. It is all that wretch's doing.'

Laure sighed, but she said nothing: for she saw that to excuse Camille would only make the jealous one more bitter against him.

'Will you deign to write to me at my new post? once a month? in answer to my letters?'

'Yes my friend. But you will ride over sometimes to see us.'

'Oh yes: but for some little time I shall not be able. The duties of a new post.'

'I understand—well then—in a fortnight or so?'

'Sooner perhaps—*the moment that man is out of the house.*'

CHAPTER XIV.

'LAURE dear, you have not walked with him at all to-day.'

'No: you must pet him yourself to-day, I hate the sight of him.'

'What has he done?'

'He has done nothing: but it has made mischief between Edouard and me, my being so attentive to him. Edouard is jealous, and I cannot wonder. After all what right have I to mystify him who honours me with his affection?'

Then, being pressed with questions by Josephine, she related to her all that had passed between Edouard and her, word for word.

Josephine.—'Poor Camille!'

Laure.—'Oh yes! poor Camille! who has the power to make us all miserable, and who does it, and will do it, until he is happy himself.'

'Ah! would to heaven I could make him as happy as he deserves to be.'

'You could easily do that. And why not do it?'

'Laure, you know very well what sacred feelings withhold me. Laure, tell me, do you think it is really possible Camille does not really know my heart, and all the feelings that strive in it?'

'My sister, these men are absurd: they believe only what they see. I have done what I can for you and Camille; but it is useless. Would you have him believe you love him, you must yourself be kind to him; and it would be a charitable action—you would make four unhappy people happy, or at least, put them on the road; *now* they are off the road, and, by what I have seen to-day, I think, if we go on so a little longer, it will be too late to try to return. Come Josephine, for my sake!'

'Ah! you say this out of kindness to me—and to me alone.'

'No, indeed, I am thinking of myself. He will make us all miserable for life if he is not made happy directly.'

'If I thought that, I could almost consent.'

'To be happy yourself?'

'I will remonstrate with him for his unkindness to me—in being miserable.'

'Josephine, I will go and tell him what you say.'

'Stay Laure.'

'No! I will not stay. There, the crime is mine.'

Laure returned the next minute.

'There,' she cried, 'he is going away.'

Josephine started.

'Going away? Impossible!'

'Yes! he is in his room, packing up his things to go. I spied through the old place and saw him. He was sighing like a furnace as he strapped his portmanteau. I hate him—but I was sorry for him. I could not help being.'

Josephine turned pale, and lifted her hands in surprise and dismay.

'Depend on it Josephine, we are wrong,' said Laure, firmly: 'these wretches will not stand our nonsense above a certain time—and they are right. My sister, we are mismanaging: one gone—the other going—both losing faith in us.'

Josephine's colour returned to her cheek, and then mounted high. Presently she smiled, a smile full of conscious power and furtive complacency.

'He will not go.'

Laure was pleased, but not surprised, to hear her sister speak so confidently, for she knew her power over Camille.

'That is right. Go to him, and say two words. "I bid you stay."'

'Oh Laure! no!'

'Poltroon! You know he would go down on his knees, and stay directly.'

'No: I should blush all my life before you and

him. I *could* not. I should let him go sooner, almost. Oh no! I will never ask a man to stay who wishes to leave me.'

'Well! but you said just now—'

'Laure, dear, go to him, and say Madame Raynal is going to take a little walk: will he do her the honour to be her companion? Not a word more, if you love me.'

'I go. Hypocrite!'

Josephine received Camille with a bright smile. She was in unusually good spirits, and overflowing with kindness and innocent affection. On this his gloomy brow relaxed, and all his prospects brightened as by magic. Then she communicated to him a number of little plans for next week and the week after. Among the rest he was to go with her and Laure to Frejus.

'Such a sweet place Camille: I must show it you. You will come?'

He hesitated a single moment: a moment of intense anxiety to the smiling Josephine.

'Yes! he would come—it was a great temptation—he saw so little of her.'

'You will see more of me now Camille!'

'Shall I see you every day—alone I mean?'

'Oh yes, if you wish it,' replied Josephine, in an off hand indifferent way.

He seized her hand and devoured it with kisses.

'Foolish Camille!' murmured she, looking down

on him with ineffable tenderness. 'Should I not be always with you if I consulted my inclination—let me go.'

'No! consult your inclination a little longer.'

'Must I?'

'Yes; that shall be your punishment for—humph!'

'For what? What have I done?' asked she, with an air of great innocence.

'You have made me happy, me who adore you.'

Josephine came in from her walk with a high colour and beaming eyes.

'Run Laure!'

On this concise, and to us not very clear instruction, Laure slipped up the secret stair. She saw Camille come in and gravely unpack his little portmanteau, and dispose his things in the drawers with soldierlike neatness, and hum an agreeable march.

She came and told Josephine.

'Ah!' said Josephine with a little sigh of pleasure, and a gentle triumph in her eyes.

She had not only got her desire, but had arrived at it her way—woman's way—round about.

This adroit benevolence led to more than she bargained for.

She and Camille were now together every day: and their hearts, being under restraint in public,

melted together all the more in their stolen interviews. Much that passed between these true lovers may well be left to the imagination.

At the third delicious interview Camille Dujardin begged Josephine to be his wife directly.

Have you noticed those half tame deer that come up to you in a park so lovingly, with great tender eyes, and, being now almost within reach, stop short, and with bodies fixed like statues on pedestals, crane out their graceful necks for sugar, or bread, or a chestnut, or a pocket handkerchief? Do but offer to put your hand upon them, away they bound that moment twenty yards, and then stand quite still, and look at your hand and you, with great inquiring, suspicious, tender eyes.

So Josephine started at Camille's audacious proposal.

'Never mention such a thing to me again: or —or, I will not walk with you any more:' then she thrilled with pleasure at the obnoxious idea, 'she Camille's wife!' and coloured all over—with rage, Camille thought. He promised submissively not to renew the topic: no more he did till next day.

The interval Josephine had spent in thinking of it.

Therefore she was prepared to put him down by calm reasons. She proceeded to do so, gently, but firmly.

Lo! and behold, what does he do, but meets

her with just as many reasons, and just as calm ones: and urges them gently, but firmly.

Heaven had been very kind to them: why should they be unkind to themselves? They had had a great escape: why not accept the happiness, as, being persons of honour, they had accepted the misery? with many other arguments, differing in other things, but agreeing in this, that they were all sober, grave, and full of common sense.

Finding him not defenceless on the score of reason, she shifted her ground and appealed to his delicacy. On this he appealed to her love, and then calm reason was jostled off the field, and passion and sentiment battled in her place.

In these contests day by day renewed, Camille had many advantages.

Laure, though she did not like him, had now declared on his side. She refused to show him the least attention. This threw him on Josephine: and when Josephine begged her to help reduce Camille to reason, her answer would run thus—

'Hypocrite!' with a kiss: or else she would say, with a half comic petulance, 'No! no! I am on his side. Give him his own way or he will make us all four miserable.'

Thus Josephine's ally went over to the enemy.

And then this coy young lady's very power of resistance began to give way. She had now battled for months against her own heart: first, for her mother: then, in a far more terrible

conflict for Raynal, for honour and purity; and of late she had been battling, still against her own heart, for delicacy, for etiquette, things very dear to her, but not so great, holy, and sustaining as honour and charity that were her very household gods: and so, just when the motives of resistance were lowered, the length of the resistance began to wear her out.

For nothing is so hard to her sex as a long, steady struggle. In matters physical, this is the thing the muscles of the fair cannot stand.

In matters intellectual and moral, the long strain it is that beats them dead. Do not look for a Bacona, a Newtona, a Handella, a Victoria Huga.

Some American ladies tell us education has stopped the growth of these.

No! mesdames. These are not in nature.

They can bubble letters in ten minutes that you could no more deliver to order in ten days than a river can play like a fountain. They can sparkle gems of stories: they can flash little diamonds of poems. The entire sex has never produced one opera nor one epic that mankind could tolerate a minute: and why?—these come by long, high-strung labour. But, weak as they are in the long run of every thing but the affections, (and there giants,) they are all overpowering while their gallop lasts. Fragilla shall dance any two of you flat on the floor before four o'clock, and then dance on till peep of day.

You trundle off to your business as usual, and could dance again the next night, and so on through countless ages.

She who danced you into nothing is in bed, a human jelly crowned with headache.

What did Josephine say to Laure one day? 'I am tired of saying "No! no! no! no! no!" for ever and ever to him I love.' She added, combining two leading ideas in one phrase as it is not given the rude logical sex to do, 'I am weary of all this cruelty.'

But this was not all. She was not free from self-reproach. Camille's faith in her had stood firm. Hers in him had not. She had wronged him, first by believing him false, then by marrying another. One day she asked his pardon for this. He replied—

'I have forgiven that, Josephine; but why not make me forget it?'

'I wish I could.'

'You can. Marry me: then your relations with that man will seem but a hideous dream. I shall be able to say, looking at you my wife—"I was faithful—I suffered something for her—I came home—she loved me still—the proof is, she was my wife within three months of my return."'

When he said that to her in the Pleasance, if there had been a priest at hand—. In a word Josephine longed to show him her love, yet wished

not to shock her mother, or offend her own sense of delicacy.

Camille cared for nothing but his love. To sacrifice love and happiness, even for a time, to etiquette, seemed to him to be trifling with the substance of great things for the shadow of petty things; and he said so: sometimes sadly, sometimes almost bitterly.

Here then was a beleaguered fortress, attacked with one will, and defended by troops one third of which were hot on the side of the besieger.

Here was a heart divided against itself, attacked by a single heart.

When singleness attacks division, you know the result beforehand. Why then should I spin words? I will not trace so ill-matched a contest, step by step, sentence by sentence: let me rather hasten to relate the one peculiarity that arose out of this trite contest, where, under the names of Camille and Josephine, the two great sexes may be seen acting the old world-wide distich,

> 'It's a man's part to try,
> And a woman's to deny, [for a while?]

Finding her own resolutions oozing away, Josephine caught at another person.

She said to Camille, before Laure—

'Even if I could bring myself to snatch at happiness in this indelicate way—scarce a month after—oh!' And there ended the lady's sen-

tence. In the absence of a legitimate full stop, she put one hand before her lovely face to hide it, and so no more. But some two minutes after she delivered the rest in the form and with the tone of a distinct remark—'My mother would never consent.'

'Yes she would, if you could be brought to implore her as earnestly as I implore you.'

'Would she Laure?' asked Josephine, turning quickly to her sister.

'No, never. Our mother would look with horror on such a proposal. A daughter of hers to marry within a twelvemonth of her widowhood.'

'There, you see, Camille.'

'But besides that she loved Raynal.'

'She has not forgotten him as we have, almost.'

'Ungrateful creature that I am,' sighed Josephine.

'She mourns for him every day. Often I see her eyes suddenly fill—that is for him. Josephine's influence with mamma is very great: it is double mine: but if we all went on our knees to her—the doctor and all—she would never consent.'

'There you see, Camille: and I could not defy my mother—even for you.'

Camille sighed.

'I see every thing is against me, even my love: for that love is too much akin to veneration to propose to you a clandestine marriage.'

'Oh thank you! bless you for respecting as well as loving me, dear Camille.'

These words, uttered with gentle warmth, were some consolation to Camille, and confirmed him, as they were intended to do, in the above good resolution. He smiled.

'*Maladroit!*' cried Laure.

'Why *maladroit?*' asked Camille, opening his eyes.

'Let us talk of something else,' replied Laure coolly.

Camille turned red. He understood that he had done something very stupid, but he could not conceive what.

He looked from one sister to the other alternately. Laure was smiling ironically.

Josephine had her eyes bent demurely on a handkerchief she was embroidering.

That evening Camille drew Laure aside.

'Will you be so generous as to explain why you called me "*maladroit?*"'

'So it was,' replied Laure sharply.

But as this did not make the matter quite clear, Camille begged a little further explanation.

'Was it your part to make difficulties?'

'No indeed.'

'Was it for you to tell her a secret marriage would not be delicate? Do you think she will be behind you in delicacy? or that a love without respect will satisfy her? yet you must go and tell her you respected her too much to ask her to

marry you secretly. In other words, situated as she is, you asked her not to marry you at all: she consented to that directly. What else could you expect?'

'*Maladroit!* indeed,' said Camille, 'but I would not have said it, only I thought—'

'You thought nothing would induce her to marry secretly, so you said to yourself I will assume a virtue: I will do a bit of cheap self-denial: decline to the sound of trumpets what another will be sure to deny me if I don't—ha! ha!—well, for your comfort, I am by no means so sure she might not have been brought to do *anything* for you, except openly defy mamma: but now of course.'

Here this young lady's sentence ended: for there was a strong grammatical likeness between the sisters.

Camille was so disconcerted and sad at what he had done, that Laure began to pity him: so she rallied him a little longer in spite of her pity: and then all of a sudden gave him her hand and said she would try and repair the mischief.

He began to smother her hand with kisses.

'Oh!' said she, 'I don't deserve all that: I have a motive of my own: your unlucky speech will be quoted to me a dozen times—never mind.'

'Josephine you will not be happy if you don't, no more will he.'

Josephine sighed.

'You heard what he said.'

'Oh, that was only to please you. He thought nothing would tempt you to do so much for him.'

'I would do anything for him but lose his respect, and make my mother unhappy.'

'Well love, you shall do neither: you shall scarcely move in the matter: only do not oppose me very violently, and all will be well.'

'Ah! Laure! I know how you love me. Am I not fortunate to have a sister who loves me, and who is so shrewd? it is delightful—terrible I mean—to have a little creature about one that reads one like this. What shall I do? What shall I do?'

'Yes Josephine. It is very plain what we must do: we must conceal it from our mother.'

'Marry, and hide my marriage from her who bore me?'

'We have concealed many things from her, dear, not to give her pain.'

'Yes! but nothing like this. I don't know what to do.'

'We must do the best we can under all the circumstances. Consider, his wound is healed. He must go back to the army; you have both suffered to the limits of mortal endurance. Is he to go away unhappy, in any doubt of your affection? are you to remain behind with the misery

of self-reproach added to the desolation of absence —think.'

'Dear Laure!! Find me some excuse for deceiving my mother.'

'Do not say deceiving our mother, that is such a shocking phrase.'

Laure then reminded Josephine of the day when Edouard had first told them a wise reticence was not the same thing as a moral deceit. She reminded her, too, how often they had acted on his advice and always with good effect; how many anxieties and worries they had saved their mother by reticence. Josephine assented warmly to this.

Was there not some reason to think they had saved their mother's very life by these reticences? Josephine assented. 'And Josephine, you are of age, you are your own mistress, you have a right to marry whom you please: and sooner or later you will certainly marry Camille. I doubt whether even our mother could prevail on you to refuse him altogether. So it is but a question of time, and of giving our mother pain, or sparing her pain. She is old, our dear mother: she is prejudiced. Why shock her prejudices? She could not be brought to understand the case: these things never happened in her day. Everything seems to have gone by rule then. Let us do nothing to worry her for the short time she has to live. Let us take a course between pain to her and cruelty to you and Camille.'

These arguments went far to convince Josephine: for her own heart supported them. Then Camille put in his word: he proposed to the sisters to let him begin by entreating the baroness: and, if she should be inexorable, then for Josephine to marry him secretly.

'Oh no!' cried Josephine, 'you shall ask her if you please, but if she says no (and she will say no), all is ended. It is much to take such a step without her sanction. Defy her I never will.'

'Had you not better be silent, Colonel *Maladroit?*' said Laure severely.

'Much better.' Cried the gallant colonel hastily in mortal terror.

Having silenced the colonel, Laure pleaded his cause then and there so ably, that Josephine went from her solid objections to untenable ones—a great point gained. She urged the difficulty, the impossibility of a secret marriage.

Camille burst into the conversation here: he undertook at once to overcome these imaginary difficulties.

'We will be married ten leagues from here.'

'You will find no priest who will consent to do such a wicked thing as marry us without my mother's knowledge.'

'Oh! as to that,' said Laure, 'you know the mayor marries people now-a-days.'

'I will not be married without a priest,' said Josephine sharply.

'Nor I,' said Camille. 'I know a mayor who will do the civil forms for me, and a priest who will marry me in the sight of heaven, and both will keep it secret for love of me till it shall please Josephine to throw off this disguise.'

'Who is the priest, Camille?' inquired Josephine, keenly.

'An old curé: he lives near Frejus: he was my tutor, and the mayor is the mayor of Frejus, also an old friend of mine.'

'But what on earth will you say to them?'

'That is my affair: I must give them some reasons which compel me to keep my marriage secret. Oh! I shall have to tell them some fibs, of course.'

'There, look!—Camille! I will not have you tell fibs—it lowers you.'

'Of course it does: but you can't have secresy without a fib or two.'

'Fibs that will injure no one,' said Laure majestically.

From this day Camille began to act as well as to talk. He bought a light calêche and a powerful horse, and elected factotum Dard his groom. Camille rode over to Frejus and told a made-up story to the old curé and the mayor, and these his old friends believed every word he said, and readily promised their services and strict secresy.

He told the young ladies what he had done.

Laure approved. Josephine shook her head;

and seeing matters going as her heart desired and her conscience did not quite approve, she suddenly affected to be next to nobody in the business, to be resigned, passive, and disposed of to her surprise by Laure and Camille, without herself taking any actual part in their proceedings.

At last the great day arrived on which Camille and Josephine were to be married at Frejus.

The mayor awaited them at eleven o'clock. The curé at twelve. The family had been prepared for this excursion by several smaller ones.

Laure announced their intention over night.

'Mamma,' said she, blushing a little, 'Colonel Dujardin is good enough to take us to Frejus tomorrow. It is a long way, and we must breakfast early or we shall not be back to dinner.'

'Do so my child. I hope you will have a fine day: and mind you take plenty of wraps with you in case of a shower.'

'I will take care, mamma.'

At seven o'clock the next morning Camille and the two ladies took a hasty cup of coffee together instead of breakfast, and then Dard brought the calêche round.

The ladies got in, and Camille had just taken the reins in his hand, when Jacintha screamed to him from the hall. 'Wait a moment, colonel! wait a moment! The doctor! don't go without the doctor!' and the next moment Doctor St. Aubin

appeared with his cloak on his arm, and, saluting the ladies politely, seated himself quietly in the vehicle before the party had recovered their surprise.

'Where shall we have the pleasure of taking you?' asked Camille, and gnawed his lip.

'To Frejus,' was the reply,

Josephine quaked. Camille was devoured with secret rage: he lashed the horse and away they went.

It was a silent party. The doctor seemed in a reverie. The others did not know what to think, much less to say. St. Aubin sat by Camille's side; so the latter could hold no secret communication with either lady.

Now it was not the doctor's habit to rise at this time of the morning: yet there he was, going with them to Frejus uninvited.

Josephine was in agony; had their intention transpired through some imprudence of Camille?

Camille was terribly uneasy. He concluded the secret had transpired through female indiscretion. Then they all tortured themselves as to the old man's intention. But what seemed most likely was, that he was with them to prevent a clandestine marriage by his bare presence, without making a scene and shocking Josephine's pride: and if so, was he there by his own impulse? 'No, it was rather to be feared that all this was done by order of the baroness. There was a finesse about it that

looked like a woman, and the baroness was very capable of adopting such a means as this, to spare her own pride and her favourite daughter's. The clandestine is not all sugar. A more miserable party never went along, even to a wedding.

After waiting a long time for the doctor to declare himself, they turned desperate, and began to chatter all manner of trifles. This had a good effect: it roused St. Aubin from his reverie, and presently to their great surprise he gave them the following piece of information—

'I told you the other day that a nephew of mine was just dead. A nephew I had not seen for many years. Well, my friends, I received last night a hasty summons to his funeral.'

'At Frejus?'

'No! at Paris! The invitation was so pressing, that I was obliged to go. The letter informed me a diligence passed through Frejus, at eleven o'clock for Paris. Fortunately you were going to Frejus. I packed up a few changes of linen, and my MS., my work on entomology, which at my last visit to the capital all the publishers were mad enough to refuse: here it is. *Apropos* has Jacintha put my bag into the carriage?'

On this a fierce footsearch, and the bag was found. Meantime Josephine leaned back in her seat with a sigh of thankfulness. She was more intent on not being found out than on being married. But Camille, who was more intent on

being married than on not being found out, was asking himself, with fury, how on earth they should get rid of St. Aubin in time.

'Well, of course under such circumstances as these the coach did not come to its time, nor till long after: and all the while they were waiting for it they were failing their rendezvous with the mayor, and making their rendezvous with the curate impossible. But above all, there was the risk of one or other of those friends coming up and blurting all out, taking for granted that the doctor must be in their confidence, or why bring him.

At last, at half-past eleven o'clock, to their great relief, up came the coach. The doctor prepared to take his place in the interior, when the conductor politely informed him that the diligence stopped there a quarter of an hour.

'In that case I will not abandon my friends,' said the doctor affectionately.

One of his friends gnashed his teeth at this mark of affection.

Josephine smiled sweetly.

At last he was gone; but it wanted ten minutes only to twelve.

Josephine inquired amiably, whether it would not be as well to postpone matters to another day —meaning for ever.

Camille replied by dragging them both very fast to the mayor.

That worthy received them with profound,

though somewhat demure respect, and invited them to a table sumptuously served. The ladies, out of politeness, were about to assent, but Camille begged permission to postpone that part until after the ceremony.

At last, to their utter wonder, they were married. Then, with a promise to return and dine with the mayor, they went to the curé. Lo! and behold, he was gone to visit a sick person. 'He had waited a long time for them,' said the servant.

Josephine was much disconcerted, and showed a disposition to cry. The servant, a goodnatured girl, nosed a wedding, and offered to run and bring his reverence in a minute.

Presently there came an old silvery haired man, who addressed them all as his children—and seemed to mean it. He took them to the church, and blessed their union: and for the first time Josephine felt as if Heaven consented. They took a gentle farewell of him, and went back to the mayor's to dine; and at this stage of the business Laure and Josephine had a sudden simultaneous cry, *apropos* of nothing that was then occurring.

This refreshed them, and they glowed at the mayor's table like roses washed with dew.

But oh! how glad at heart they all were to find themselves in the carriage once more going home to Beaurepaire.

Laure and Josephine sat intertwined on the back seat: Camille, the reins in his right hand, nearly

turned his back on the horse, and leaned back over to them and talked with Laure and looked at his wife with ineffable triumph and tenderness.

The lovers were in Elysium, and Laure was not a little proud of her good management in ending all their troubles. Their mother received them back with great, and as they fancied with singular affection. She was beginning to be anxious about them, she said. Her kindness gave these happy souls a pang it never gave them before.

Since the above events scarce a fortnight had elapsed: but such a change. Camille sunburnt and healthy, and full of animation and confidence: Josephine beaming with suppressed happiness, and more beautiful than even Laure could ever remember to have seen her. For a soft halo of love and happiness shone around her head: a new and indefinable attraction bloomed on her face. She was a wife. Her eye that used to glance furtively on Camille, now dwelt demurely on him—dwelt on him with a sort of gentle wonder and surprised admiration as well as affection, and when he came or passed near her, a keen observer might just have seen her thrill.

She kept a good deal out of her mother's way: for she felt within that her face must be too happy. She feared to shock her mother's grief with her radiance. She was ashamed of feeling unmixed heaven. But the flood of secret bliss she floated in bore all misgivings away. The pair were for

ever stealing away together for hours, and on these occasions Laure used to keep out of her mother's sight, until they should return. So then the new-married couple could wander hand in hand through the thick woods of Beaurepaire, whose fresh green leaves were now just out, and hear the distant cuckoo, and sit on mossy banks, and pour love into one another's eyes, and plan ages of happiness, and murmur their deep passion and their bliss almost more than mortal: could do all this and more, without shocking propriety. These sweet duties passed for trios: for on their return Laure would be looking out for them, or would go and meet them at some distance, and all three would go up together to the baroness, as from a joint excursion. And then they went up to their bedrooms, Josephine would throw her arms round her sister's neck, and sigh—'it is not happiness—it is beatitude!!'

'Meantime the baroness mourned for Raynal. Her grief showed no decrease. Laure even fancied at times she wore a gloomy and discontented look as well: but on reflection she attributed that to her own fancy, or to the contrast that had now sprung up in her sister's beaming complacency.

Laure herself when she found herself day after day alone for hours, was sad and thought of Edouard. And this feeling gained on her day by day.

At last one afternoon she locked herself in her own room, and after a long contest with her pride, which if not indomitable was next door to it, she sat down to write him a little letter. Now in this letter, in the place devoted by men to their afterthoughts, by women to their pretended afterthoughts, *i. e.* to what they have been thinking of all through the letter, she dropped a careless hint that all the party missed him very much, '*even the obnoxious colonel, who by-the-by has transferred his services elsewhere. I have forgiven him that, because he has said civil things about you.*'

Laure was reading her letter over again, to make sure that all the principal expressions were indistinct, and that the composition generally except the postscript resembled a Delphic oracle, when there was a hasty footstep, and a tap at her door.

'Come in,' and in came Jacintha, excited.

'He is come, Mademoiselle Laure,' cried she, and nodded her head like a mandarin, only more knowingly: then she added, 'so you may burn the letter.' For her quick eye had glanced at the table.

'Who is come?' inquired Laure eagerly.

'Why your one?'

'My one?' asked the young lady reddening, 'my what?'

'The little one—Edouard—Monsieur Riviere.'

'Monsieur Riviere!' cried Laure acting agree-

able surprise. 'I am so glad. Why could you not say so: you use such phrases it is impossible to conjecture who you mean. I will come to Monsieur Riviere directly: mamma will be so glad.'

Jacintha gone, Laure tore up the letter and locked up the pieces—then tore to the glass.

Etc.

Edouard was so thoroughly miserable that he could stand it no longer: so in spite of his determination not to visit Beaurepaire while it contained a rival, he rode over to see whether he had not tormented himself idly: above all to see the beloved face.

Jacintha put him into the *salle à manger*.

'By that you will see her alone,' said the knowing Jacintha.

He sat down, hat and whip in hand, and wondered how he should be received.

In glides Laure all sprightliness and good humour, and puts out her hand to him; the which he kisses.

'How could I keep away so long?' asked he vaguely, and self astonished.

'How indeed, and we missing you so all the time!'

'Have *you* missed me?' was the eager inquiry.

'Oh, no!' was the cheerful reply: 'but all the rest have.'

Presently the malicious thing gave a sudden start.

'Oh! such a piece of news: you remember Colonel Dujardin—the obnoxious colonel?'

No answer.

'Transferred his attentions sir—fancy!'

'Who to?'

'To Josephine and mamma. But such are the military. He only wanted to get rid of you: this done (through your want of spirit,) he scorns the rich prize: so now I scorn *him*—will you come for a walk?'

'Oh yes!'

'We will go and look for my deserter. I say, tell me now: cannot I write to the commander in chief about this? when all is done a soldier has no right to be a deserter—has he? tell me, you are a public man, and know everything—except ha! ha!'

'Is it nottoo bad to tease me to-day?'

'Yes! but let me do it. I do like it so. Please, I have had few amusements of late.'

'Yes, you shall tease me. I feel I deserve no mercy.'

Formal permission to tease being conceded, she went that instant on the opposite tack, and began to tell him how she had missed him, and how sorry she had been anything should have occurred to vex their kind good friend. In short, Edouard spent a delightful day, for Laure took him one way to meet Josephine, who she knew was coming another. When the whole party assembled, the last embers

of jealousy were quenched, for Josephine was a wife now and had already began to tell Camille all her little innocent secrets; and she had told him all about Edouard and Laure and had given him his orders: so he treated Laure with great respect before Edouard: but paid her no marked attention: also he was affable to Riviere, who having ceased to suspect began to like him.

In the course of the evening, the colonel also informed the baroness that he expected every day an order to join the army of the Rhine.

Edouard pricked his ears.

The baroness said no more than politeness dictated. She did not press him to stay, but treated his departure as a matter of course. Riviere rode home late in the evening in high spirits.

The next day, Laure varied her late deportment: she sang snatches of melody, going about the house: it was for all the world like a bird chirping. In the middle of one chirp Jacintha interfered. 'Hush, mademoiselle, your mamma! she is at the bottom of the corridor.'

'What am I thinking of?' said Laure, 'to sing!'

'Oh! I dare say you know, mademoiselle,' replied the privileged domestic.

A letter of good news came from St. Aubin. It was not for nothing that summons to his nephew's funeral.

The said nephew was a rich man and an oddity;

one of those who love to surprise folk, and hate to be foreseen and calculated upon. Moreover, he had no children, and detected his nephews and nieces being civil and attentive to him. 'Waiting to cut me up!' was his generous reading of them. So with all this he turned restive, and made a will, and there defied, as far as in him lay, the laws of Nature.

For he set his wealth a flowing backwards instead of forwards.

He handed his property up to an ancestor, instead of down to posterity.

All this the doctor related with some humour, and in the calm spirit with which a genuine philosopher receives prosperity as well as adversity.

One little regret escaped him: that all this wealth, since it was to come, had not come one little half-year sooner.

All at Beaurepaire knew what their dear old friend meant.

He added that the affairs would be wound up by the lawyers, and it would take twelve months. He was, therefore, free; and they might expect him any day after this letter.

So here was another cause of rejoicing.

'I am so glad,' said Josephine. 'Now, perhaps he will be able to publish his poor dear Entomology, that the booksellers were all so unkind, so unfeeling about.'

CHAPTER XV.

It was a fair morning in June: the sky was a bright, deep, lovely, speckless blue: the flowers and bushes poured perfume and sprinkled song upon the balmy air. On such a day—so calm, so warm, so bright, so scented, so tuneful—to live and to be young is to be happy. With gentle hand it wipes all other days out of the memory; it laughs, and clouds and rain and biting wind seem as far off and as impossible as grief and trouble.

Camille and Josephine had stolen out, and strolled lazily up and down close under the house, drinking the sweet air, fragrant with perfume and melody, the blue sky, and love.

Laure was in the house. She had missed them: but she thought they must be near: for they seldom took long walks early in the day. Meeting Jacintha on the landing of the great staircase, she asked her where her sister was.

'Madame Raynal is gone for a walk, Mademoiselle Laure.'

'Alone?'

'Oh no, mademoiselle. She took the colonel with her. You know she always takes the colonel out with her now.'

'That will do. You can finish your work.'

Jacintha went into Camille's room.

Laure, who had looked as grave as a judge while Jacintha was present, bubbled into laughter. She even repeated Jacintha's words aloud and chuckled over them: 'You know she always takes the colonel out with her now—ha! ha! ha!'

'Laure!' cried a distant voice.

Laure looked round, and saw the baroness, at some distance in the corridor, coming slowly towards her, with eyes bent gloomily on the ground. Laure composed her features into a settled gravity, and went to meet her.

'I wish to speak with you my daughter.'

'Yes mamma.'

'Let us sit down: it is cool here.'

Laure ran and brought a seat without a back, but well stuffed, and set it against the wall. The old lady sat down and leaned back, and looked at Laure in silence a good while; then she said

'There is room for you; sit down, my youngest.'

'Yes dear mamma.'

'I want to speak seriously to you.'

'Yes my mother: what is it?'

'Turn a little round, and let me see your face.'

'There mamma.'

'Perhaps you can guess what I am going to say to you?'

'No! there are so many things.'

'Well, I am going to put a question to you.'

'Yes mamma.'

'I invite you to explain to me the most singular, the most unaccountable thing that ever fell under my notice. Will you do this for your mother?'

'Oh mamma, of course I will do anything to please you that I can: but indeed I don't know what you allude to.

'I am going to tell you.'

The old lady paused. The young one felt a chill of vague anxiety strike across her frame.

'Laure,' said the old lady, speaking very gently but firmly, and leaning in a peculiar way on her words, while her eye worked like an ice gimlet on her daughter's face, 'a little while ago—when my poor Raynal—our benefactor—was alive—and I was happy—you all chilled my happiness by your gloom: the whole house seemed a house of mourning—tell me now why was this.'

'Mamma!' said Laure, after a moment's hesitation, 'we could hardly be gay. Sickness in the house! And if Colonel Raynal was alive, still he was absent, and in danger.'

'Oh! then it was out of regard for him we were all dispirited?'

'Why not?' said Laure faintly. She congra-

tulated herself that her mother's suspicion was confined to past events.

'Good!' said the baroness. 'In that case, tell me why is it that ever since that black day when the news of his *death* reached us, the whole house has gone into black, and has gone out of mourning?'

'Mamma,' stammered Laure, 'what do you mean?'

'Even poor Camille, who was so pale and wan, has recovered like magic.'

'Oh! mamma, is not that fancy?'

'Humph? it may be—or may not: but the rest is certain. I have seen the change: at first I doubted my senses, and that is why I said nothing. I waited to be sure—and now I am sure. So tell me. Do you hesitate? Is it come to this then? has my youngest secrets from her mother?'

'Oh! mamma—pray! pray! do not scold me! You will break my heart! Of what do you suspect me? Can you think I am unfeeling—ungrateful? I should not be *your* daughter!'

'My child,' said the baroness, 'I have not scolded you. On the contrary. I see you attempt sorrow as you put on black. My Laure is too rightminded not to do this.'

'Thank you, mamma,' said Laure, humbly.

'But, my poor child, you do it with so little skill that I see a horrible gaiety breaking through that thin disguise: you are no true mourners: you

are like the mutes or the undertakers at a funeral, forced grief on the surface of your faces, and frightful complacency below.

'Tra la! lal! la! la! Tra la! la! Tra la! la!' carolled Jacintha, in the colonel's room hard by.

The ladies looked at one another: Laure in great confusion.

'Tra la! la! la! Tra lal! lal! la! la! la!'

'Jacintha!' screamed Laure, angrily.

'Hush! not a word to her,' said the baroness; and when Jacintha appeared on the threshold, in answer to the summons, she sent her down to do her own room.

'Why remonstrate with *her?* Servants are like chameleons: they take the tone of those they serve. Do not cry! I wanted your confidence not your tears, love. There, I will not twice in one day ask you for your heart: it would be to lower the mother, and give the daughter the pain of refusing it, and the regret, sure to come one day, of having refused it. I will discover the meaning of it all by myself. Kiss me, my youngest.'

'Oh mamma! mamma!'

'There, there, dry your eyes, and go out into the garden this fine day. I shall be sure to find it out without tormenting you any more, my beloved. Stay! you can tell all who respect *me*, it will be as well to *try* at least and mourn the death of my dear son.'

'Yes Camille, all is lovely, all is happy; but one sad thought *will* come. You will leave me.'

'Not to-day.'

'How like a soldier that is!'

'It is true,' said Camille: 'the fact is we are seldom sure of a day: I mean when we are under arms.'

'Must you go at all? Must you risk again the life on which my life depends?'

'My dear that letter I received from head quarters two days ago, that inquiry whether my wound was cured. A hint, Josephine—a hint too broad for any soldier not to take.'

'Camille you are very proud,' said Josephine with an accent of reproach, and a look of approval.

'I am obliged to be. I am the husband of the proudest woman in France.'

'Hush! not so loud: there is Dard on the grass.'

'Dard!' muttered the soldier with a word of meaning.

There was a sudden silence between the lovers. Camille broke it.

'Josephine,' said he a little peevishly, 'how much longer are we to lower our voices, and turn away our eyes from each other, and be ashamed of our happiness?'

'Five months longer; is it not?' answered Josephine quietly.

'Five months longer!!!'

'Is this just, Camille? Think of two months ago: yes, yes, two months ago, you were dying. You doubted my love, because it could not overcome my virtue and my gratitude; yet you might have seen it was destroying my life. Poor Raynal, my husband, my benefactor, died! Then I could do more for you, if not with delicacy, at least with honour; but no! words, and looks, and tender offices of love were not enough, I must give stronger proof. Dear Camille, I have been reared in a strict school: and perhaps none of your sex can know what it cost me to go to Frejus that day with him I love!'

'My own Josephine!'

'I made but one condition; that you would not rob me of my mother's respect: to her such a marriage would appear monstrous, heartless. You consented to be secretly happy for six months. One fortnight has passed, and you are discontented again.'

'Oh, no! do not think so. It is every word true. I am an ungrateful villain!'

'You, Camille? how dare you say so? and to me! No! I have thought, and I have discovered the reason of all this—you are a man!!!'

'So I have been told: but my conduct to you, sweet one, has not been that of a man from first to last. Yet I could die for you, with a smile on my lips. But when I think that once I lifted this sacriligious hand against your life—oh!'

'Do not be silly Camille. I love you all the better for loving me well enough to kill me.'

'The greater shame of me who am your husband, yet am—'

'Hush!'

'Discontented—what a scoundrel!'

'I tell you, you foolish thing, you are a man: monseigneur is one of the lordly sex, that is accustomed to have everything his own way. My love, in a world that is full of misery, here are two that are condemned to be secretly happy a few months longer: a hard fate for one of your sex it seems: but it is so much sweeter than the usual lot of mine, that really I cannot share your misery,' and she smiled joyously.

'Then share my happiness, my dear wife.'

'Hush! not so loud!'

'Why Dard is gone, and we are out of doors, will the little birds betray us?'

'The lower windows are open, and I saw Jacintha in one of the rooms.'

'Jacintha?!! we are in awe of the very servants. Well if I must not say it loud I will say it often,' and putting his mouth to her ear, he poured a burning whisper of love into it—'My love! my angel! my wife! my wife! my wife!'

She turned her swimming eyes on him.

'My husband!' she whispered in return.

Laure came out and found them almost literally

billing and cooing. She looked into their beaming faces, and said pettishly—

'You *must not* be so happy, you two.'

'We can't help it.'

'You must and shall help it; Josephine, our mother has reproached me with the joy she sees around her. She suspects.'

'She has spoken to you? Your eyes are red. She has found me out.'

'No! not so bad as that. Come away from the house a little way, and I'll tell you.'

'After all,' said Laure, as soon as they got into the park, 'why conceal the truth from her any longer? She will forgive us.'

'Take care Laure,' said Camille slily, 'I have just offended her by a word of the kind.'

'How can I tell my mother that within six weeks of my husband's death?'

'Don't say your husband,' put in Camille wincing; 'the priest never confirmed that union: words spoken before a magistrate do not make a marriage in the sight of Heaven.'

Josephine cut him short.

'Amongst honourable men and women all oaths are alike sacred: and Heaven's eye is in a magistrate's room as in a church. A daughter of the house of Beaurepaire gave her hand to Captain Raynal, and called herself his wife. Therefore she was his wife: and is his widow. She owes him everything; the house you are all living in

among the rest. She ought to be proud of her brief connection with that pure, heroic spirit, and, when she is so little noble as to disown him, then say that gratitude and justice have no longer a place among mankind!'

'Come into the chapel,' said Camille with a voice that showed he was hurt.

They entered the chapel, and there they saw something that thoroughly surprised them: a marble monument to the memory of Raynal. It leaned at present against the wall below the place prepared to receive it. The inscription, short, but emphatic, and full of feeling, told of the battles he had fought in, including the last fatal skirmish, and his marriage with the heiress of Beaurepaire: and, in a few soldier-like words, the uprightness, simplicity, and generosity of his character.

The girls were so touched by this unexpected trait in Camille that they threw their arms round his neck by one impulse.

'Am I wrong to be proud of him?' said Josephine, triumphantly. 'You conquered yourself here, my brave soldier.'

'Do not praise me,' said Camille, looking down confused. 'One tries to be good; but it is very hard—to some of us—not to you, Josephine; and, after all, it is only the truth that we have written on that stone. Poor Raynal! he was my old comrade; he saved me from death, and not a soldier's

death—drowning; and he was a better man than I am, or ever shall be. Now he is dead, I can say these things. If I had said them when he was alive, it would have been more to my credit.'

Farther comment was cut short by two workmen, who came in with a pail of liquid cement, to place and fix the slab.

Camille and the ladies went back towards the house; and then, as praise seemed to make Camille uncomfortable, they naturally fell upon the other topic.

Laure told them all that had passed between the baroness and her. When Laure came to the actual details of that conversation, to the words, and looks, and tones, Josephine's uneasiness rose to an overpowering height.

'We have underrated mamma's shrewdness. What shall I do?'

'Better tell her than let her find out,' said Laure. 'We must tell her some day.'

At last, after a long and agitated discussion, Josephine consented: but Laure must be the one to tell all to the baroness.

'So then, you at least will make your peace with mamma,' argued Josephine, 'and let us go in and do this before our courage fails; besides, it is going to rain, and it has turned cold. Where have all these clouds come from? An hour ago there was not one in the sky!'

They went, with hesitating steps and guilty

looks, to the saloon. Their mother was not there. A reprieve.

Laure had an idea. 'No, I will not tell her here. I will ask her to go out with me; and then I will take her to the chapel, and show her the monument, and then she will be so pleased with poor Camille: after that, when she is softened, I will begin by telling her all the misery you have both gone through; and, when she pities you, then I will show her it was all my fault your misery ended in a secret marriage.'

'Ah, Laure! you are my guardian angel. I feel cold at what is coming: it is very good of you to make the plunge for us. After all, to-morrow must come. To-morrow we shall be no longer playing a part, and hiding our hearts from our dear mother. It will seem like a return to nature to be once more open to her, as we used to be till this last twelvemonth.'

Laure assented warmly to this, and the confederates sat there waiting for the baroness. At last, as she did not come, Laure rose to go to her. 'When the mind is made up, it is no use being cowardly, and putting off,' said she, firmly. For all that her cheek had but little colour left in it when she left her chair with this resolve.

CHAPTER XVI.

Now it happened as Laure went down the long saloon to carry out their united resolve, that Jacintha looked in; and, after a hasty glance to see who was present, she waited till Laure came up to her, and then she drew a letter from under her apron and gave it her.

'A letter for my mistress,' said she, with an air of mystery.

'Why not take it to her, then?'

'I thought you might like to see it first, mademoiselle,' said she, with a quiet meaning.

'A letter for our mother, Josephine, that is all.'

'Is it from the dear doctor?' asked Josephine.

'La, no, mademoiselle,' said Jacintha; 'don't you know the doctor is come home? Why he has been in the house near an hour. He is with my lady.'

The doctor entered the room at this very moment: Laure threw down the letter, and she and the whole party were instantly occupied in greeting him.

When they had all shaken hands with him, and

welcomed him again and again, Laure remembered the letter, and took it up to carry to the baroness. Looking at it then more closely, she uttered an exclamation, and beckoned the doctor hastily.

He came to her: and she put the letter into his hand.

He put up his glasses, and eyed it.

'Yes!' whispered he, 'it is from *him*.'

Josephine and Camille saw something was going on: they joined the other two, with curiosity in their faces.

Laure put her hand on a small table near her, and leaned a moment. She turned half sick at a letter coming from the dead.

'My love! my Laure!' cried Josephine, with great concern, 'what is the matter?'

'My poor friends,' said the doctor, solemnly, 'this is one of those fearful things that you have not seen in your short lives, but it has been more than once my lot to witness it. The ships that carry letters from distant countries vary greatly in speed, and are subject to detaining accidents. Yes, this is the third time I have seen a letter come written by a hand known to be cold. The baroness is a little excited to-day, I don't know from what cause. With your approbation, Madame Raynal, I will read this letter before I let her see it.'

'Read it, doctor!'

'Shall I read it out?'

'Certainly. There may be some wish expressed in it: and the last wishes of a hero are sacred.'

Camille, from delicacy, retired to some little distance, and the doctor read the letter in a low and solemn voice.

'*My dear mother,—I hope all are well at Beaurepaire, as I am, or I hope soon to be. I received a wound in our last skirmish; not a very severe one; but it put an end to my writing for some time.*'

'Poor fellow! it was his death-wound. Why, when was this written?—why?' and the doctor paused, and seemed stupified: 'why, my dears, has my memory gone, or'—and again he looked eagerly at the letter, 'for God's sake what was the date of the battle in which he was killed? for this letter is dated the 15th of May. Is it a dream?—no!—this was written since his death.'

'No, doctor,' said Camille hastily, 'you deceive yourself.'

'Why, what was the date of the *Moniteur*, then?' asked St. Aubin, in great agitation.

'Considerably later than this,' said Camille.

'Well but suppose it was—you don't see—the journal! the journal!'

'My mother has it locked up. I'll run.'

'No, Laure, no one but me. Josephine, do not give way to hopes that may be delusive. But I tell you plainly there are hopes. I must see that journal directly. Stay where you are. I will go to the baroness.' He hurried out.

He was scarcely gone when a cry of horror filled the room, a cry as of madness falling like a thunderbolt on a human mind.

It was Josephine, who up to this had not uttered one word. She stood, white as a corpse, in the middle of the room, and wrung her hands.

'What have I done? What shall I do? It was the third of May! I see it before me in letters of fire—the third of May! the third of May!—and he writes the 15th.'

'No! no!' cried Camille wildly. 'It was long, long after the third.'

'IT WAS THE THIRD OF MAY!' repeated Josephine in a hoarse voice that none would have known for hers.

Camille ran to her with words of comfort and hope: he did not share her fears. He remembered about when the *Moniteur* came, though not the very day. He threw his arm lovingly round her as if to protect her against these shadowy terrors. Her dilating eyes seemed fixed on something distant in space or time—at some horrible thing coming slowly towards her. She did not see Camille approach her, but the moment she felt him she turned upon him swiftly.

'Do you love me—you?' still in the hoarse voice that had so little in it of Josephine.

'Oh, Josephine!'

'Does one grain of respect or virtue mingle in your love for me?'

'What words are these, my wife?'

'Then leave Raynal's house upon the instant. You wonder I can be so cruel? I wonder too: and that I can see my duty so clear in one short moment. But Camille I have lived twenty years since that letter came. Oh my brain has whirled through a thousand agonies. But I have come back a thousand times to the same thing—you and I must see each other's face no more.'

Camille threw himself on his knees, and implored her to recall her words.

'Take care,' she screamed wildly, 'I am on the verge of madness; is it for you to thrust me over the precipice? Come now, if you are a man of honour, if you have a spark of gratitude towards the poor woman who has given you all except her fair name—that she will take to the grave in spite of you all—promise that you will leave Raynal's house this minute if he is alive, and let me die in honour as I have lived.'

'No, no!' cried Camille terror-stricken; 'it cannot be! Heaven is merciful! and Heaven sees how happy we are! Be calm! these are idle fears—be calm I say! Well then, my poor saint, if it is so I will obey you. I will stay, I will go, I will die, I will live. Whatever you bid me do, I will do, my poor Josephine.'

'Swear this to me by the thing you hold most sacred!'

'I swear by my love for you.'

Agitated voices were heard at the door, and the baroness burst in, followed by the doctor who was trying in vain to put some bounds to her emotion and her hopes.

'Oh my children!—my children!' cried she trembling violently. 'Here Laure, my hands shake so; take this key, open the cabinet, there is the *Moniteur*. What is the date?'

'The 20th of May.'

'There!' cried Camille! 'I told you!'

The baroness uttered a feeble moan. Her hopes died as suddenly as they had been born, and she sank drooping into a chair, with a bitter sigh!

Camille stole a joyful look at Josephine. She was in the same attitude looking straight before her as at a coming horror. Presently Laure uttered a faint cry, 'the battle was *before!*'

'To be sure,' cried the doctor: 'you forget, it is not the date of the paper, but of the battle it records. For God's sake when was the battle?'

'THE THIRD OF MAY,' said Josephine, in a voice that seemed to come from the tomb.

Laure's hands that held the journal fell like a dead weight upon her knees. She whispered—

'It was the third of May.'

'Ah!' cried the baroness, starting up. 'He may yet be alive! He must be alive! Heaven is merciful! Heaven would not take my son from me. A poor old woman who has not long to live. There was a letter! Where is the letter?'

'Yes, the letter! Where is it?' said the doctor. 'I had it: it has dropped from my old fingers. I thought of nothing but the journal.'

A short examination of the room showed the letter lying crumpled up near the door. Camille gave it to the baroness.

'Read!—read! no, not you, old friend! You and I are old: our hands shake, and our eyes are troubled: this young gentleman will read it to us: his eyes are not dim and troubled. Oh! something tells me that when *I* hear this letter, I shall find out whether my son lives! Why do you not read it to me Camille?' cried she almost fiercely.

Camille, thus pressed, obeyed mechanically, and began to read Raynal's letter aloud, scarce knowing what he did, but urged and driven by the baroness.

'*My dear mother,—I hope all are well at Beaurepaire, as I am, or I hope soon to be. I received a wound in our last skirmish; not a very severe one; but it put an end to my writing for some time.*'

'Go on, dear Camille! go on.'

'The page ends there, madam.'

The paper was thin, and Camille, whose hand trembled, had some difficulty in detaching the leaves from one another. He succeeded, however, at last, and went on reading and writhing.

'*By the way you must address your next letter to me as Colonel Raynal. I was promoted just before this last affair, but had not time to tell you.*'

'There, there!' cried the baroness. 'He was Colonel Raynal, and Colonel Raynal was not killed.'

'Pray don't interrupt.'

'No my friend: go on Camille—why do you hesitate? what is the matter? do for pity's sake go on, sir.'

Camille cast a look of agony around, and put his hand to his brow, on which large drops of cold perspiration, like a death dew, were gathering; but driven to the stake on all sides, he gasped on rather than read: for his eye had gone down the page.

'*A namesake of mine—Commandant Raynal!*'

'Ah!'

'*Has not been—so fortunate: he—*'

'Go on! go on!'

The wretched man could now scarcely utter Raynal's words: they came from him in a choking groan.

'*He was killed—poor fellow!—while heading a gallant charge upon the enemy's flank.*'

The letter was ground convulsively; then it fell all crumpled on the floor.

'Bless you Camille!' cried the baroness, 'bless you! bless you! I have a son still! Give me the precious letter!'

She stooped eagerly, took it up, and kissed it again and again.

'Your husband is alive! my son is alive! our benefactor is alive!'

Then she fell on her knees, and thanked Heaven aloud before them all. Then she rose and went hastily out, and her voice was heard crying very loud—

'Jacintha! Jacintha!'

The doctor followed, fearful for the effects of this violent joy on so aged a person. The three remained behind, panting and pale like those to whom dead Lazarus burst the tomb, and came forth in a moment—at a word. Then Camille half kneeled half fell at Josephine's feet, and in a voice choked with sobs bade her dispose of him.

She turned her head away.

'Do not speak to me, do not look at me: if we look at one another, we are lost. Go! die at your post, and I at mine!'

He bowed his head, and kissed her dress, then he rose calm as despair and white as death, and, his knees knocking under him, he tottered away like a corpse set moving.

The baroness came back, triumphant and gay.

'I have sent her to bid them ring the bells in the village; the poor shall be feasted—all shall share our joy—my son was dead, and lives, oh joy! joy! joy!'

'Mother!' shrieked Josephine.

'Mad woman that I am, I am too boisterous. Help me Laure! she is going to faint—her lips are white.'

They brought a chair. They forced Josephine into it. She was not the least faint: yet her body obeyed their hands just like a dead body. The baroness burst into tears; tears streamed from Laure's eyes. Josephine's were dry and stony, and fixed on coming horror. The baroness reproached herself.

'Thoughtless old woman. It was too sudden: it is too much for my dear child. I, too, am faint now;' and she kneeled, and laid her aged head on her daughter's bosom, saying feebly through her tears, 'too much joy—too much joy.'

Josephine took no notice of her. She sat like one turned to stone, looking far away over her mother's head with rigid eyes fixed on the air and on coming horrors.

Laure felt her arm seized. It was St. Aubin. He too was pale now, though not before. He spoke in a terrible whisper to Laure, his eye fixed on the woman of stone that sat there.

'Is THIS JOY?'

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY W. CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET
AND CHARING CROSS.

Exferto Crede

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 084218772